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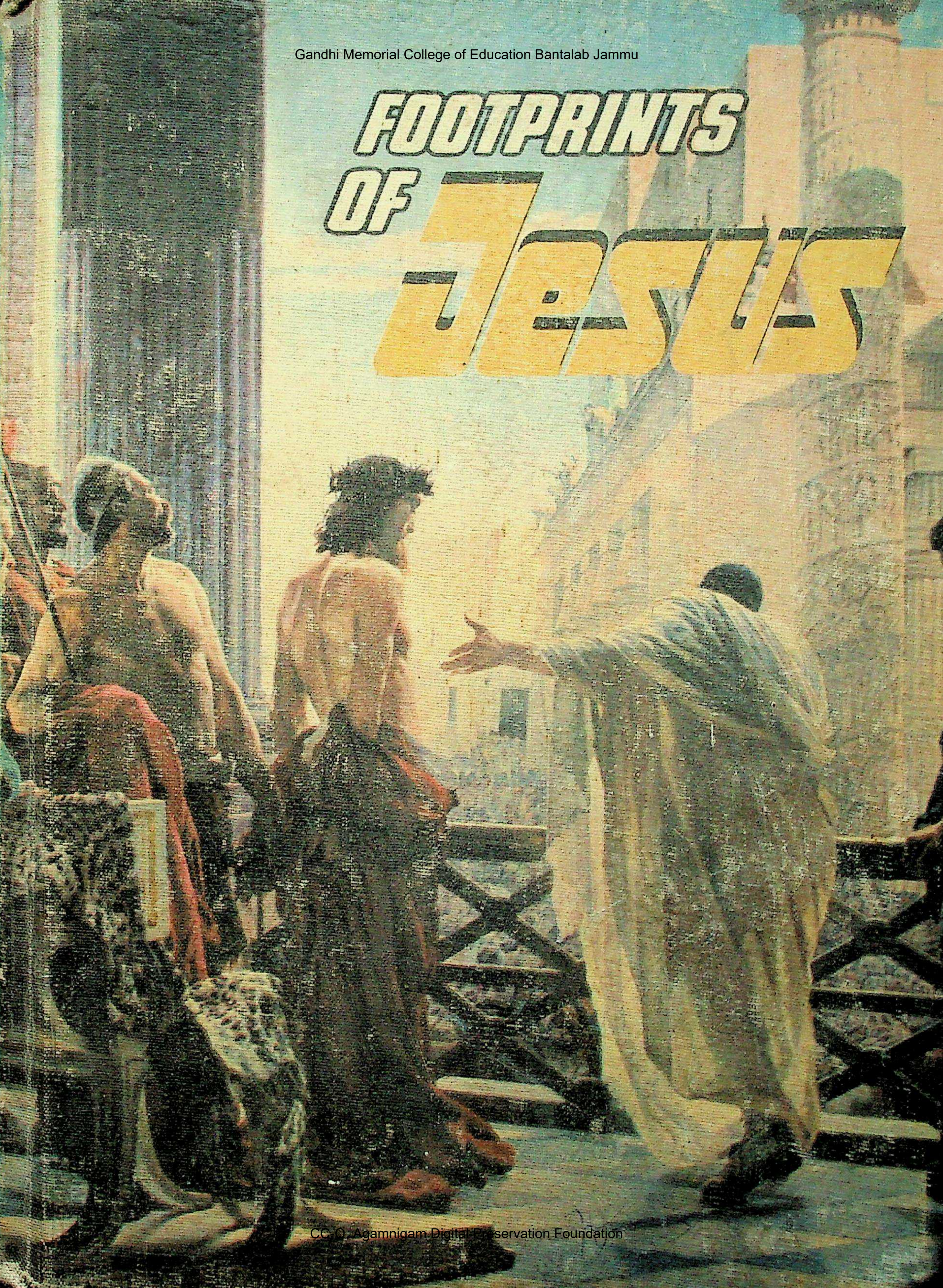

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Part 4

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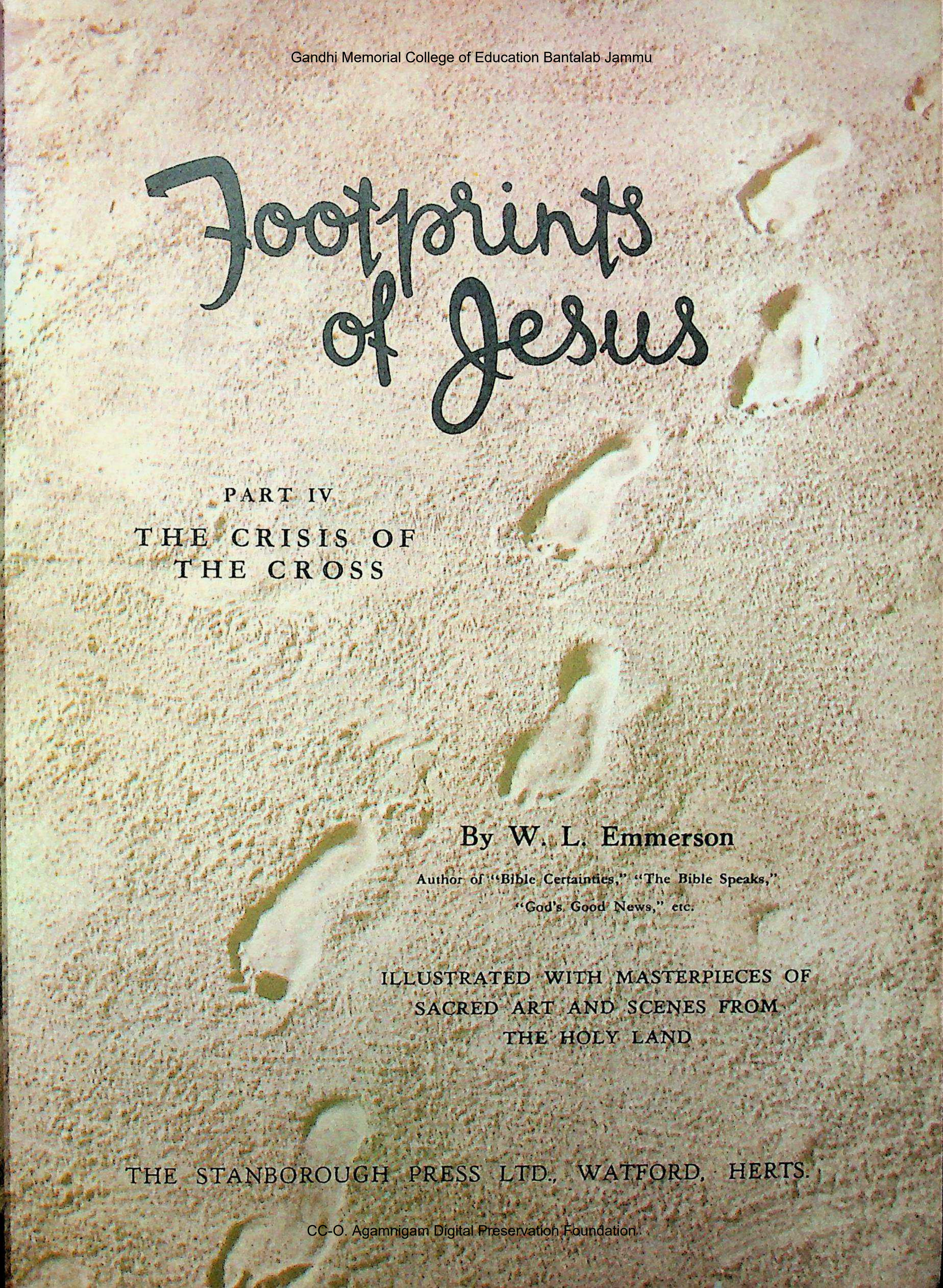

Footprints of Jesus

PART IV

THE CRISIS OF THE CROSS

By W. L. Emmerson

Author of "Bible Certainties," "The Bible Speaks,"
"God's Good News," etc.

ILLUSTRATED WITH MASTERPIECES OF
SACRED ART AND SCENES FROM
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CHAPTER ONE

The Approaching Crisis

AT the beginning of His ministry Jesus was baptized by John in the Jordan not far from the ford at Beth-Hogla. As He crossed the muddy river for the last time, and began the ascent to the city of Jericho on the upper plain, His thoughts must have gone back to that day, three and a half years before. For now His earthly ministry was nearing its end.

The Passover pilgrims who were travelling the same road were singing on their way, happy that the long journey, in some cases of many weeks, was almost completed. The disciples would have liked to join in, but somehow they could not, for they had noticed a significant change in the demeanour of Jesus. Whereas before He had been ready to speak with all who came to Him, and to bless the mothers and their children in the villages through which He passed, now He had suddenly become silent. No longer did He walk with them, but strode on ahead, deep in meditation.

What thoughts must have been passing through the mind of Jesus as He walked along? He fully knew the ordeal that awaited Him. He could have escaped His approaching end if He had turned back and not gone to Jerusalem. But He had come "to seek and to save" lost mankind, and to do this He must give His life as a sacrifice and a ransom. So He had set His face "like a flint" to finish His work. He would carry to its conclusion the plan He had agreed with His Father. He would fulfil all that prophecy had declared of Him since the beginning. For not only had "the Spirit of Christ . . . testified beforehand" the course and climax of His earthly ministry, but the inspired prophet Isaiah had categorically declared, "He shall not fail."

Yet Jesus was not at this time concerned so much for Himself. He was thinking

The chief priests and rulers gather to plot Jesus' death.
By J. J. TISSOT

more of His disciples who soon were to be bereft of their Master and Friend.

Since leaving Cæsarea Philippi in Galilee, He had twice tried to prepare their minds for the tragedy of the cross. On one occasion He had pressed the warning upon His disciples in the words, "Let these sayings sink down into your ears," but they "understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not." And now, as they approached Jerusalem for the fateful Passover, Jesus knew what a terrible shock the events of the next week or so were going to be to them. So He determined to speak more plainly than ever before.

Stopping to allow the twelve to come up with Him, He led them from the crowded highway into a quiet grove. As they sat down around Him they sensed that He had something momentous to tell them and they were "afraid."

"Behold," Jesus began, "we go up to Jerusalem, and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished." What He was going to say should not have been new to them, for every detail of His approaching sufferings and death had been foretold by Moses, David, and the other prophets.

"The Son of man," Jesus went on, "shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes." The rulers of the Jews had long been plotting His arrest, but their evil plans had up to now been frustrated by His popularity with the people. But though they dared not take Him openly, their designs would come to fruition through the help of one of the immediate associates of Jesus who would betray Him into their hands.

Up to this time Jesus had not named His betrayer, nor did He now do so, for Judas had not yet made the fatal decision. Ever since Jesus refused to allow Himself to be made King after the miracle of the loaves and fishes, Judas had been telling the disciples that Jesus should not delay longer in declaring Himself. And as they journeyed to Jerusalem for another Passover he became increasingly impatient. He still followed Jesus in the hope of a rich reward when He came into His kingdom, but as the rulers became more and more incensed against Him, Judas saw his chances slipping rapidly away. He therefore came to the conclusion that he would have to force Jesus' hand. But still he did not connect himself with the "betrayer" of whom Jesus spoke.

"The Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and . . . the scribes," continued Jesus, "and they shall condemn Him to death." Since their humiliation at Bethesda the rulers of the Jews had been piling up evidence against Jesus, and by now they had a long list of possible charges ready—undermining the law of Moses, speaking against the tradition of the Jews, seducing the people, and blasphemy. These, they felt, were more than enough to condemn Him to death and they were determined, as soon as they could lay hands on Him, to bring Him speedily to trial.

But while confident that they would have no difficulty in passing a death sentence upon Jesus, they realized that they would not themselves be able to execute it, for the ultimate power of life and death had been withdrawn by the Roman overlords from all their subject peoples. The chief priests, however, had foreseen this and had laid their plans to meet the situation.

They knew that after the feeding of the five thousand the people had tried to make Jesus King, and though He had not allowed them to do so, He had more than once said that one day He would be their King. If they told Pilate this, the Roman governor could not but condemn Him for inciting rebellion.

Jesus had not previously mentioned the part the Romans would have in His death, but now He told His disciples: "They . . . shall deliver Him to the Gentiles and they shall mock Him, and shall scourge Him, and shall spit upon Him," all of which indignities were heaped upon Jesus first by Herod and then by Pilate and the Roman soldiery.

Finally, Jesus said, they would "crucify Him." In the early days of His ministry Jesus had told Nicodemus that He would be "lifted up" as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness, and several times He had warned His disciples that, like Him, they must take up their "cross," but never had they imagined that Jesus was speaking literally.

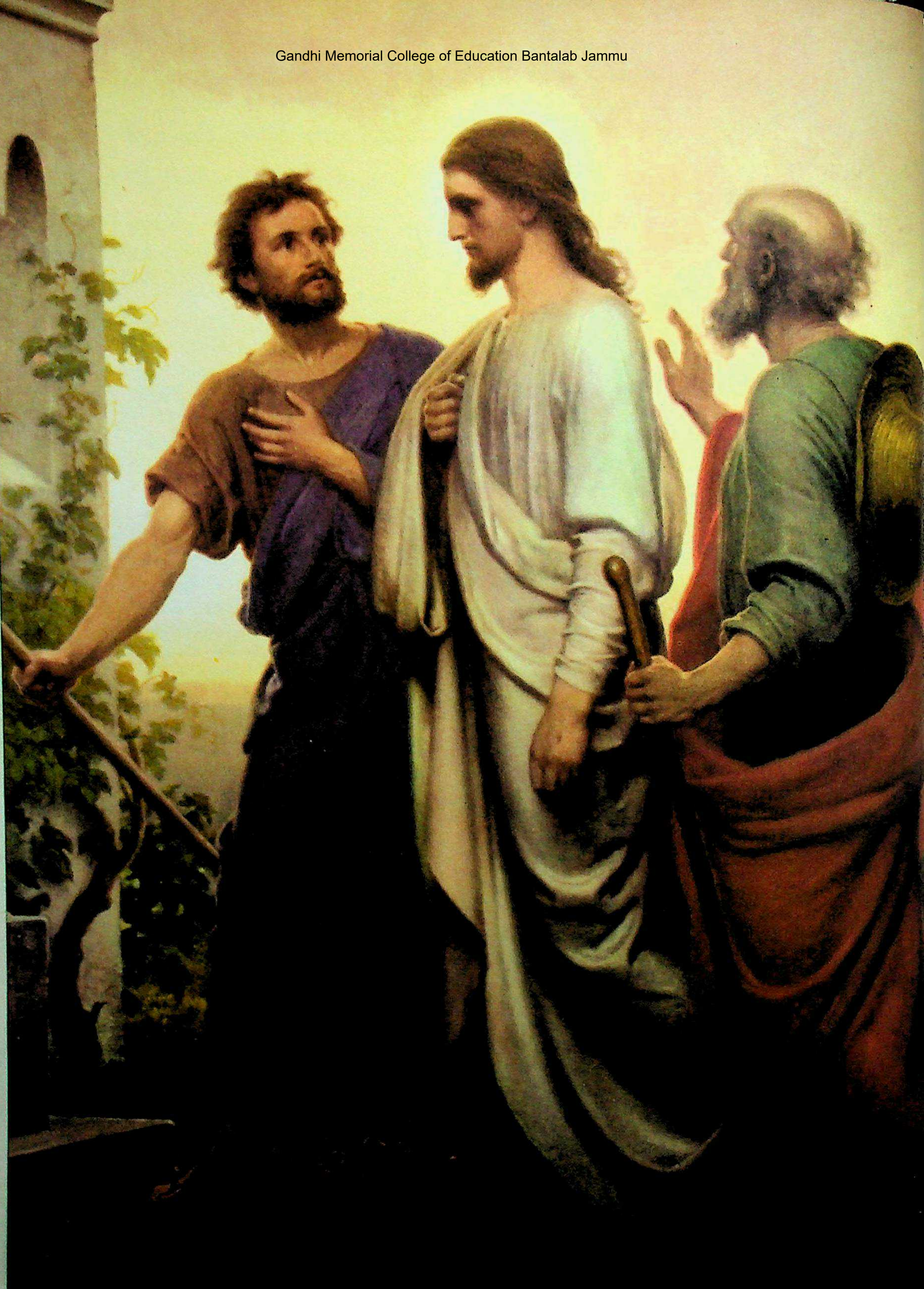
Now Jesus re-emphasized what He had first mentioned on the way down from Galilee, that He would be "crucified." Not only would He die vicariously for sinners, but He would be put to the most shameful of deaths, "even the death of the cross." Thus would be fulfilled the prophetic words of the Psalmist, "They pierced My hands and My feet."

But Jesus' recital of His sufferings and death did not end there. The triumph of His enemies, He declared, would be short-lived. On "the third day" He would "rise again" as the Psalmist also had foretold: "For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption." Bursting the bonds of the tomb Jesus would come forth and ascend in triumph to His Father, to plead as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary the merits of His sacrifice on behalf of repentant sinners, then as Judge to pass sentence on the rejectors of His grace, and finally to take His place as King over the kingdom His sacrifice had purchased.

It seems strange that the disciples, even after Jesus had spoken so explicitly, still "understood none of these things: and this saying was hid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken." Yet so it was; the tragedy of the cross, when it came, took them completely unawares, and they all, with one accord, "forsook Him, and fled" in disappointment and despair.

Not until after Jesus rose from the dead and they beheld His resurrection glory did the literal truth of what Jesus so many times tried to explain dawn upon their minds. Then, at long last, did they recognize the paramount significance of these events in the plan of salvation, and went forth powerfully to declare, "Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

This chapter is based on Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34.



CHAPTER TWO

True Ambition

DESPITE Jesus' plain declaration concerning His imminent suffering and death, the thoughts of the disciples were still upon the "twelve thrones" which He had promised them in His kingdom and which they imagined must now be very near. So, as they journeyed toward Jericho, there was contention among them as to who would have the places nearest to His throne.

The women who were travelling with the disciples took no part in the discussion, but the claims some put forward aroused the concern of Salome, the wife of Zebedee. Her two sons, James and John, were among the first disciples of Jesus and had always been His most intimate associates. Surely then, they had most right to places of honour next to Christ. So she determined to forestall any move on the part of the others to secure pre-eminent positions by speaking personally to Jesus. Bidding her two sons follow her she caught up with Him as He walked a little distance ahead, and respectfully asked permission to make a request.

"What wilt thou?" Jesus inquired kindly. Salome went straight to the point. "Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on the left, in Thy kingdom."

If Jesus had administered a sharp rebuke to this ambitious mother it would have been well deserved. But He was more sad than angry at her selfish request.

Replying not to Salome but to James and John who stood, rather embarrassed, beside her, He said, "Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" Their minds were upon the places of authority to which they aspired and the crowns they hoped to wear. But Jesus wanted them to realize that before He took His seat

---

Jesus walks with two of His disciples.
By ANTON DORPH

upon His glorious throne He would be uplifted upon a cruel cross, and only those who were prepared to share His sufferings could have a part in His glory.

"You ask for places nearest to Me in My kingdom," He said in effect, "but are you prepared to stay by My side through everything until I attain My throne? If you desire to reign with Me, you must be prepared to drink first of the cup of My sufferings and even to receive the baptism of death in My cause."

So anxious were the two disciples for an answer to their request, that they dismissed the counter-question of Jesus with the easy assurance, "We are able."

Had He wished, Jesus could have pricked the bubble of their self-confidence by telling them that, within a week, both they and their companions would have deserted Him and left Him to face the supreme ordeal of His earthly life alone. But mercifully He spared them this exposure. Despite the weakness of the flesh, He knew that the brothers dearly loved Him and that through deep humiliation they would learn the lesson of selfless surrender and trust. So He said gently, "Ye shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with." And they did, for James was actually the first of the twelve to be martyred at the hands of Herod Antipas; and John, though he outlived all the other apostles and died a natural death, did suffer exile and torture for the name of Christ.

Yet, even though they would share His cup and His baptism, it was not for Him, who was also God's "Servant," to apportion the rewards of the kingdom. In His all-wise providence the Father had prepared places in the kingdom for all who, by His grace, "overcame," but these honours would be disclosed only in the day of final rewards. Furthermore, the fact that they had been first to join Him would not give them any advantage over those who joined Him at the "third," the "sixth," the "ninth," or even the "eleventh" hour as He had explained in His parable of the "pence." It was for them to be faithful in the ministry committed to them as He was in His, and their reward would be appropriate and sure.

While they were talking, the other disciples came up, and, hearing references to His "right hand" and His "left," they guessed why Salome and her two sons had engaged Jesus in private conversation. Naturally they were indignant that James and John had sought to take a mean advantage of them.

It pained Jesus to see such a spirit among His disciples and, calling them to Him, He said, "Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you." "Whosoever," He continued, "will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister."

Greatness in the kingdoms of the world, Jesus explained, is coveted because of the privileges of wealth and influence and power which it confers, but greatness in the kingdom of heaven is based on service not privilege. The first in the kingdom of God are not the most "lording" but the most lowly, not the most served but the most serving.

In the Old Testament, God described His Son prophetically as "My Servant," and the apostle Paul sets forth the perfect example of Jesus and His consequent exaltation and reward. He who was "in the form of God" and "equal with God: . . . made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." He "humbled Himself" in ministry for others, and finally became "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore," the apostle declares, "God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

The supreme exaltation of Jesus was the result of His supreme sacrifice, and the places of honour beside Him in the kingdom are reserved for those who render like loving service to God. "To him [that is, everyone] that overcometh, will I grant to sit *with Me* in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Furthermore, greatness in the kingdom will continue to be not the greatness of privilege, but the greatness of ministry. The angels who are now closest to the throne of God are "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation," and chief among the occupations of the saints who will reach that blessed abode will be that "His servants shall serve Him." Through the eternal years, service to God will be the supreme honour coveted by His children.

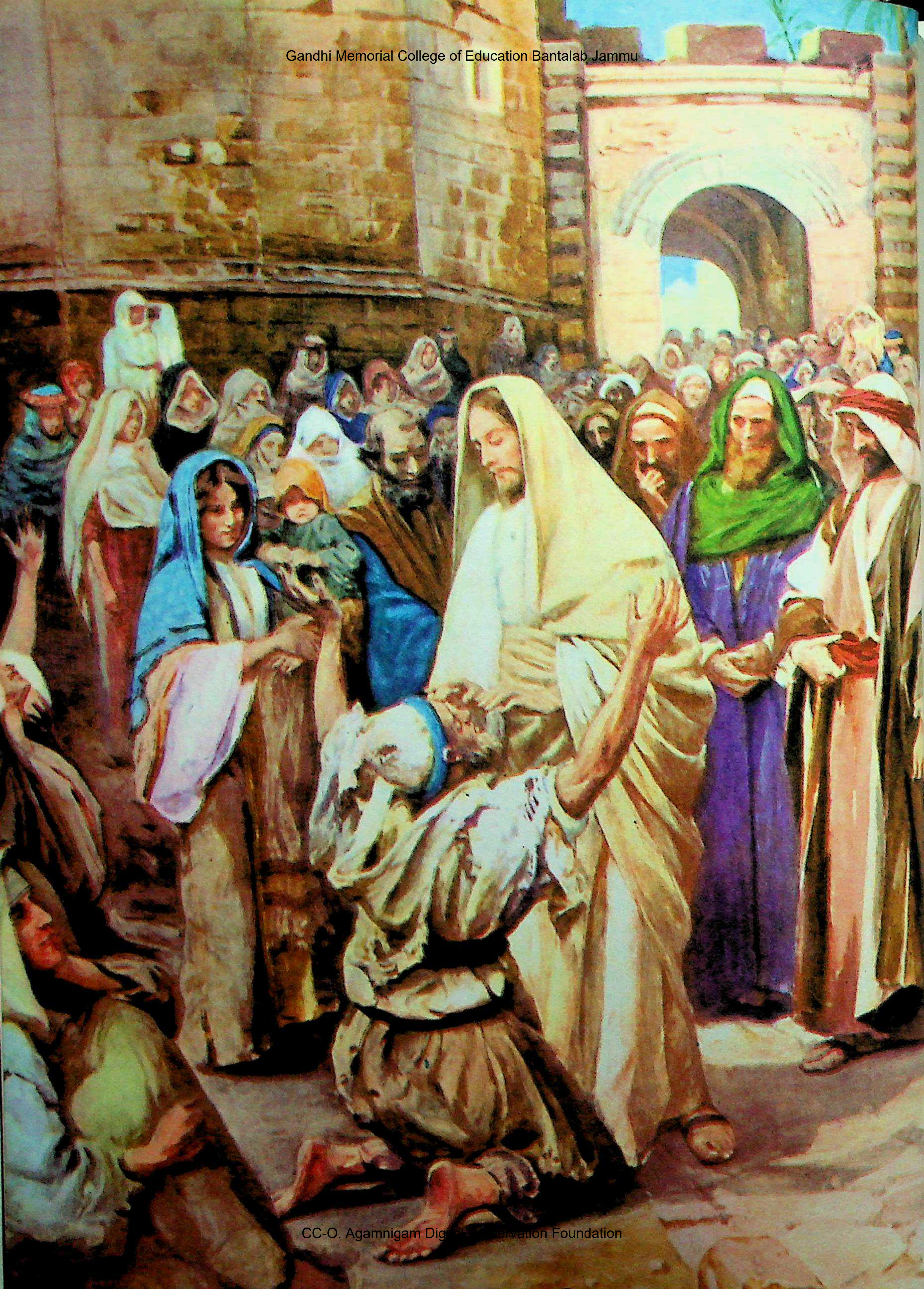
But now lest we should think, as some have done, that the service man can render to God differs from the service of Christ for man only in degree, Jesus concluded His exhortation with a vital phrase which must not be overlooked. He came "to minister," and "to give His life a ransom for many."

While man's service is to be like Christ's in selfless devotion, in this last respect His sacrifice was unique and unrepeatable, for it provided not merely an example, but a "ransom" for man.

This word was used in the time of Jesus for the price needed to release a slave from bondage and make him a free man; and it was in this sense, spiritually, that Jesus used it. The Psalmist had declared of lost sinners, "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: for the redemption of their soul is precious." So by His death Jesus provided the ransom price, available in no other way, to buy them back or redeem them for the kingdom of God.

Sad to say, however, though the death of Christ was "ransom" enough to cancel all sin and deliver every sinner from eternal death, many will fail to avail themselves of the gracious offer. Jesus spoke sadly but truly when He told His disciples that His life would be a "ransom for many," but not for all. Happy are those who are able to declare with Charles Wesley, "His blood avails for me."

This chapter is based on Matthew 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45.



CHAPTER THREE

Blind Bartimæus

FROM the tropical jungle through which the muddy Jordan flowed, a winding road ascended through a parched, treeless region to the fertile plain which extended to the foothills of the wilderness of Judea. On this plain, watered by the Fountain of Elisha and other abundant springs, stood the Herodian city of Jericho. A mile or so to the north and nearer to the hills lay the scattered ruins of the Jericho destroyed by Joshua.

In the days of Jesus, Jericho was one of the most beautiful cities in all Palestine. All around, spreading across the lush plain, were date palm groves, balsam and rose gardens, rich orchards of almond, citron, cherry, pomegranate, and orange. Beyond were fields of wheat and maize which ripened earlier than anywhere else in Palestine and sometimes produced a double harvest.

It is little wonder that Mark Antony chose this "city of perfumes" as a present to Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, and that Herod the Great was so anxious to buy it back from her to make it his winter capital.

Lying astride the main road from the Jordan ford to Jerusalem, Jericho was also an important caravan city. Along this highway came traders and travellers from the tetrarchy of Galilee and Perea, from the Nabatean kingdom to the south, and from Arabia and beyond. And at the time of the Jewish feasts the road was thronged with pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to worship.

In addition to being a pleasure resort and a great commercial city, Jericho was also one of the priestly cities of Judea and many thousands of priests lived here between their periods of duty in the temple at Jerusalem.

Blind Bartimæus prostrated himself before Jesus.

By P. PAYTON REED

Naturally, the large population and wealth of Jericho attracted a multitude of beggars who, at all times, in the hope of invoking the sympathy of the numerous passers-by, could be found sitting in the gates and along the roads entering into and leaving the city.

Like the hundreds of other travellers on this great highway, Jesus and His disciples rested overnight in Jericho, on the seventh of Nisan, lodging either at an inn in the town or in a tent or arbour on the outskirts. News of Jesus' presence quickly passed from mouth to mouth among the pilgrims who were constantly arriving, and when He set out the next morning a great crowd of people accompanied Him.

Just outside the gates, "nigh unto" the city, sat two blind beggars, companions in distress. One, like the second demoniac at Gadara, is not named, but the other was Bartimæus, which means "the son of Timaios." Bartimæus had not been born blind, but he had lost his sight a long time before and had probably occupied this particular spot for years.

As the crowd approached the place where the beggars were sitting, the quick ears of Bartimæus recognized that there were many more people than usually walked together and he inquired if someone special was with them. When he was told that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by, his heart pounded with excitement.

He had heard of the wonderful miracles Jesus had wrought, and that many blind people had recovered their sight. This was an opportunity not to be missed. He must attract the attention of the great Healer and make his own plea. So, as the crowd drew near, he began to shout as loudly as he could, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me."

The use of this Messianic title by Bartimæus does not necessarily mean that he believed Jesus was the Messiah, but he must have heard the title used of Him, and in order to press his claim for healing he saluted Jesus with the deepest respect and honour. When the other blind man heard Bartimæus calling he also joined in lustily, anxious that Jesus should heal him also.

Thinking that Jesus would not have time to stop and speak to two poor beggars, those nearest roughly told them to cease their shouting, but, like the Phœnician woman, they kept on all the more, "Have mercy on us, O Lord, Thou Son of David."

They need have had no fear that Jesus would pass by unheeding. He had heard their first cry, and it was only to test their faith that He did not call them at once. Their continued cries assured Him of their ardent desire, and as He came near He stopped and bade the people bring the men to Him.

Those who had been telling Bartimæus and his companion to stop shouting now ran excitedly to them crying, "Be of good comfort, rise, He calleth thee."

According to our version the blind men immediately jumped up and threw off their outer garments in their eagerness to respond to the call of Jesus, but some early manuscripts say that they "pulled on" their garments. This would seem to be the more likely for they had laid their outer cloaks aside as they sat in the sun. When summoned to appear before so important a person as Jesus they naturally donned them again so as to appear properly clothed before Him.

Guided by many helping hands they were soon in the presence of Jesus. They fell on their knees before Him, their sightless eyes raised in humility and pleading faith.

Addressing Himself to Bartimæus Jesus asked, "What wilt thou that I shall do unto thee?" Of course, Jesus knew that he wanted to receive back his sight, but He wished Bartimæus to voice his request for his own benefit, and to attract the attention of the people who were passing by. Immediately Bartimæus replied, "Lord, that I may receive my sight."

Never did Jesus turn from any poor sufferer who came to Him in faith for succour. Stretching forth His hand He touched the blind eyes, saying as He did so, "Receive thy sight: thy faith hath saved thee." And as He spoke the words the eyes of Bartimæus were instantaneously opened. Jesus then did the same for the other beggar, and both saw clearly.

So happy were the two men to have their sight perfectly restored that they at once determined to go up with the other worshippers to the Passover feast and, glorifying God, they followed Jesus as He went on His way. And all the people who saw the miracle "gave praise unto God" also.

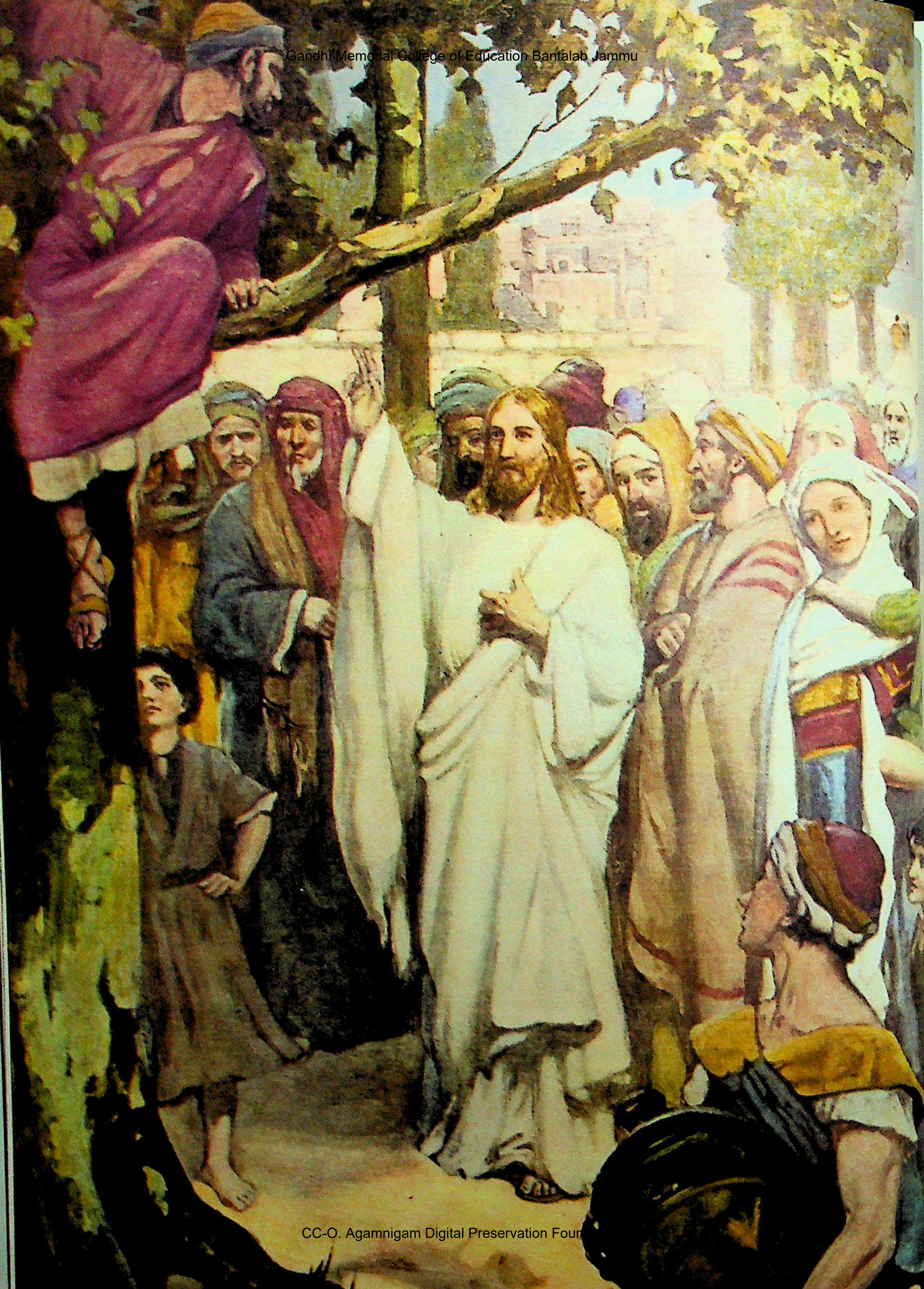
The healing of blind Bartimæus and his companion, like all the miracles of Jesus, is a wonderful story, but it is also more than that. It is a parable of the spiritual healing of every sin-blinded soul. On more than one occasion Jesus referred to sinners as having eyes, yet not being able to see, and the apostle Paul explains how Satan blinds the eyes of those who believe not, in order that the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ may not shine upon them. Isaiah, therefore, prophetically declared that one of the purposes for which Jesus would come would be to open spiritually blind eyes, as well as those bereft of physical sight. So blind Bartimæus represents all sad souls who, sitting in spiritual darkness, long for the gift of sight and salvation.

As the crowd bade Bartimæus and his companion cease their crying, so there are always people ready to dissuade those who seek to come to Jesus; but as surely as Jesus heard, above the surrounding din, the cry of the two poor sufferers, we may be sure that He hears the cry of every needy soul who strives to come to Him.

As Jesus touched the blind eyes of Bartimæus and his companion, so He touches the lives of the spiritually blind who in faith seek His aid and they come forth out of darkness to walk as Christ-illuminated children of light.

If this wonderful experience has come to us through the touch of the Great Physician, surely we should, like them, "glorify God" and by His grace seek day by day to follow Him.

This chapter is based on Mark 10:46-52; Matthew 20:29-34; Luke 18:35-43.



CHAPTER FOUR

Zaccheus Entertains Jesus

BECAUSE of its position on the main caravan route across the lower Jordan, Jericho was one of the most important customs posts in Judea. Indeed, as a revenue collecting centre it occupied a position corresponding precisely with that of Capernaum in the north. Customs duty was imposed there on all goods coming in from Herod's territory in Galilee and Perea and beyond, and it was doubtless also the financial centre for the rich farms and estates of the surrounding plain.

The chief commissioner of the tax office in Jericho was a Jew named Zaccheus. Just what his reputation was we do not know, but it probably completely belied his name, which ironically meant "pure."

Like all the Jewish tax gatherers working for the Herods or the Roman government, Zaccheus had enriched himself by extorting from merchants and the local population far more than he was required to pay to his employers, and for his rapacity and disloyalty to his own nation he was without doubt hated by his fellow countrymen.

But, like the erstwhile tax gatherer Matthew-Levi, Zaccheus was not without his better feelings. Though rich, he was unsatisfied in heart. He may have been influenced first by the preaching of John the Baptist, who had urged the publicans in his audience to "exact no more" than was due to them, and probably he had also listened to Jesus on a number of occasions when He was passing through Jericho. He may even have learned how Matthew-Levi had become one of Christ's disciples. At any rate, what he had heard had aroused in him a desire to reform his life, and already he had begun to make amends where he could to those whom he had defrauded.

As Jesus passed under the tree in which Zaccheus sat, He looked up and spoke to him.
By W. D. ADAMS

When he learned that Jesus was in Jericho again with the Passover pilgrims, Zaccheus determined that he must hear Him, and if possible speak to Him. So, leaving his desk, he joined the noisy crowds which thronged after Jesus.

Unfortunately, Zaccheus was of very short stature and though he ran hither and thither among the multitude he could not get within sight or earshot of Jesus. Being a resourceful little man a bright idea soon came to him. He would slip ahead of the crowds and get up into one of the Egyptian fig or sycamore trees which bordered the road on the outskirts of the town. This would be easy enough as the roots of these trees arched out from the trunk above the ground and provided convenient steps up which he could readily ascend to one of the lower branches. In such a position he would have a good view of Jesus as He passed by.

No-one took any notice of the rich publican as he hurried off, for quite likely other people also were intent on finding a good position, and no sooner was he ensconced in a convenient tree than Jesus came walking slowly along. As He passed right under where Zaccheus was sitting the little publican was amazed to see Him suddenly stop and look straight up into his face. Then He spoke. "Zaccheus," said Jesus, "make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house."

Zaccheus was so surprised and excited that he almost fell out of the tree in his eagerness to obey Jesus. It was a mystery to him how Jesus knew his name, and it was unbelievable that He should offer to enter the house of a despised tax-gatherer. But he was only too glad to have such a wonderful opportunity, and quickly he led Jesus to his palatial home.

Quite likely Zaccheus lived some little distance out of Jericho on his own farm or estate, and so in going there Jesus did not need to retrace His steps. In the home of Zaccheus He would be able to take His midday meal and rest much more comfortably than by the dusty roadside.

That Jesus should offer to enter the home of a publican aroused consternation and murmurings among some of the local inhabitants, especially the proud priests, who took it as an insult that He should prefer such company to theirs.

At any other time Zaccheus might have been angered by their criticisms, but so touched was he by the kindness of Jesus that he determined there and then to make public confession of his past misdeeds, and of his resolve to make more than full restitution for all the injustice he had done. "Behold, Lord," he declared in the hearing of his enemies, "the half of my goods I [will] give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I [will] restore him fourfold."

Those who knew Zaccheus must have been staggered at the promise he so publicly made. Normally the law of Moses required only the addition of a fifth when restitution was voluntarily made for dishonesty. When a matter came before the courts, a fine of double might be imposed; but only in the case of the most deliberate and felonious fraud was four times the amount exacted. And here was Zaccheus voluntarily imposing upon himself the extreme penalty of the law.

What a contrast this revealed between the rich publican and the young ruler who had come to Jesus not many days before. The publican was willing to surrender all to win Christ. The ruler clung to his riches and lost the precious word of salvation.

In recognition of his confession and promise of restitution, Jesus immediately responded, "This day is salvation come to this house," and for the benefit of the priests in the crowd He added, "Forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham."

As a servant of Rome and a traitor to his country Zaccheus had, in the estimation of the strict Jews, forfeited his birthright; but Jesus acknowledged him to be a truer "son of Abraham" than they, for the essential qualification for kinship with Abraham was not so much descent according to the flesh, but faith in God and in His Son, and this Zaccheus certainly had. As Paul, on another occasion, said, "He is not a Jew which is one outwardly; . . . but he is a Jew which is one inwardly." The true children of Abraham are not the children of the flesh, but the children of faith. That is why Abraham is called "the father of the faithful."

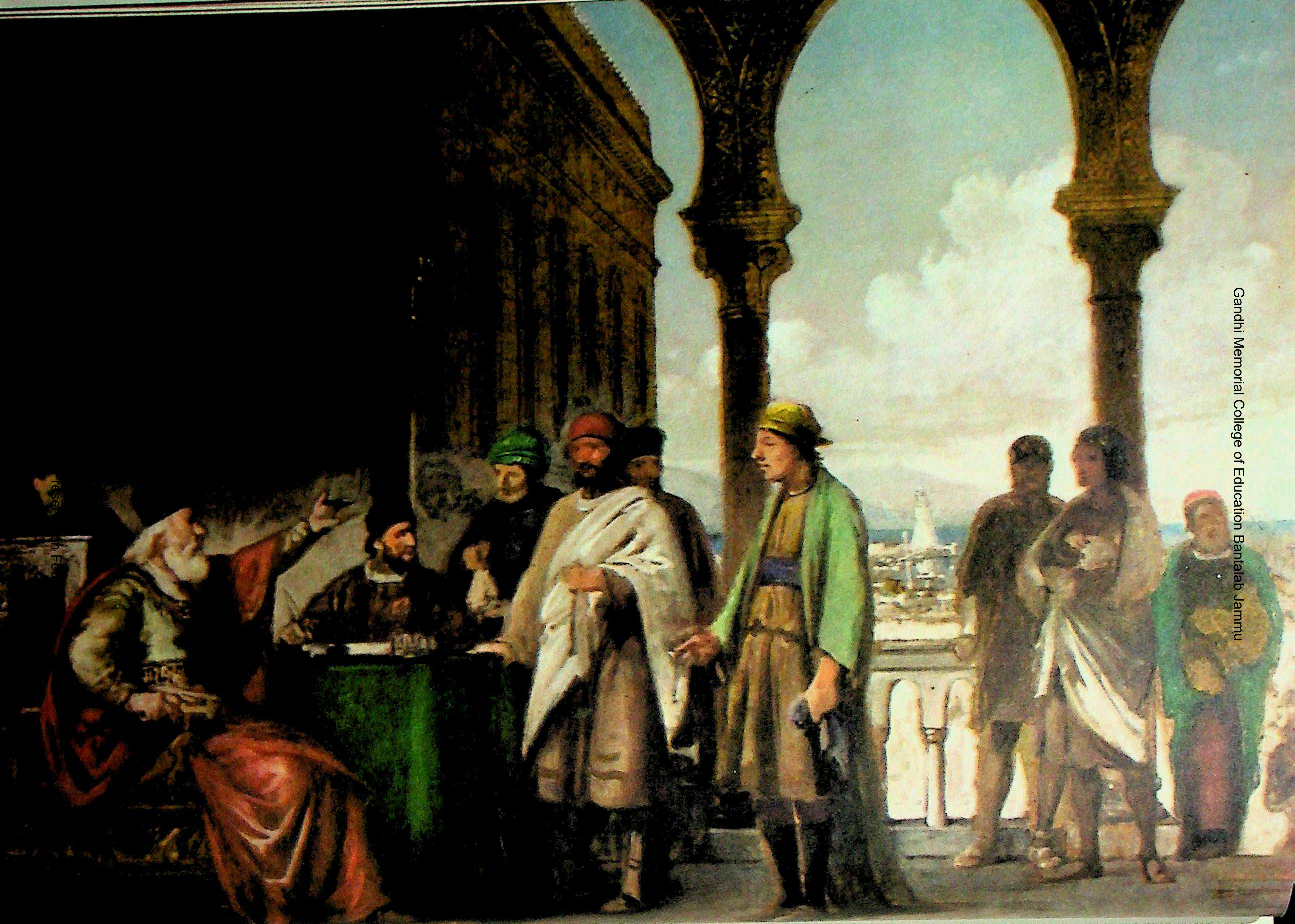
In Zaccheus' experience is revealed the true relation of faith and works in the life of the believers. The Pharisee in the temple ostentatiously told God all the good works he was in the habit of doing, in the expectation of receiving due recognition from God. But such works were rejected as valueless because he was "going about to establish his own righteousness." Zaccheus came to Jesus acknowledging his sin and by faith alone found salvation. Then, as the new power of grace came into operation in his life, it manifested itself in works of faith which Jesus at once commended.

The works of Zaccheus were not carried out with a view to claiming credit for his actions, but were the result of the faith generated in his heart by the power of Jesus. The Pharisees' works were, in the sight of God, "dead works," but the works of Zaccheus were the fruit of his new relationship with Jesus and with God.

Faith in Christ does not render works unnecessary as some have thought, for James truly says, "Faith without works is dead," but the works of the true child of God are the result of the outworking of faith, and not a basis for earning salvation.

That Jesus during His brief sojourn in Jericho should have stopped to heal poor Bartimæus and his companion, and then brought salvation to the home of the rich publican Zaccheus, emphasized again the universality of His ministry. Truly He said as He left the home of Zaccheus, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." It does not matter to Jesus whether the seeking soul is rich or poor, learned or ignorant, Jew or Gentile. It matters only that he realizes his need of Jesus, and none who seek Him in faith will He ever turn empty away

This chapter is based on Luke 19:1-10.



CHAPTER FIVE

The Parable of the Pounds

As Jesus continued on His way toward Jerusalem the excitement among the pilgrim crowds intensified. The rumour was going around, perhaps fostered by the disciples who still misunderstood the earthly mission of Jesus, that at this Passover He would declare Himself in power and splendour as the long-awaited Messiah.

Time and again Jesus had tried to disabuse the minds of those who hoped for an immediate realization of the kingdom and now once again, as He sat down to rest, He sought to clarify their thinking about the kingdom.

"A certain nobleman," He began, "went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." Jesus often used local colour to arouse interest in His parables, and this beginning could not fail to capture the attention of the people of Jericho. Herod the Great had to go to Rome in 40 B.C., to gain the support of the Senate for his claim to Judea against that of Antigonus, while on Herod's death in 4 B.C., his sons Archelaus, Herod Antipas, and Philip had to appear in Rome to secure confirmation of their father's will from Cæsar Augustus.

Though there was no comparison between the character of the Herods and of Jesus, He used the long journey which claimants often had to make to secure their kingdoms as an illustration of the journey He must make before taking the throne which was rightfully His. His departure was to be at His ascension; the far country was heaven, where the kingdom would be confirmed to Him by His Father; and His return will be at His future second advent in glory. That He should choose a nobleman as a type of Himself was indeed appropriate for, according to the flesh, He was of the royal line of David and in His essential nature He was the incarnate Son of God.

The slothful servant received the just condemnation of his master.
By V. MARSTRAND

Continuing His parable, Jesus went on to describe, under the type of this nobleman, the varying reactions to His own claim to kingship. First, there were those who "hated him," and who sent a protest to the one who had authority to confirm his claim, saying, "We will not have this man to reign over us."

This actually happened to Archelaus, a deputation of fifty being sent after him to Rome to try to persuade Cæsar not to give him the kingdom. They succeeded to the extent that he was denied the title of king and put on probation.

Jesus, too, had bitter enemies among the rulers of the Jews who were equally determined that He should not assume the kingship, though their hatred, unlike that directed against Archelaus, was "without cause."

The nobleman, however, had his supporters, as Jesus also had in the disciples who followed Him during His earthly ministry and all who have since believed in Him. To each of these a work is committed. "And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds," or minas, that is one mina to each.

In this parable, unlike the parable of the talents, which Jesus told on a later occasion, it is to be noticed that each of the servants received the same amount, because here He was not directing attention to the differing personal gifts or talents for which God makes men responsible, but to the gift of the Gospel which is bestowed equally upon all.

The nobleman's final instruction to his servants, "Occupy till I come," sets forth the common responsibility of all believing Christians as "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" to dispense, according to their capacity, the sacred treasure placed in their keeping.

In process of time the nobleman was confirmed in his office and returned to take his kingdom. On his arrival he first called together his loyal supporters to give an account of their activities during his absence. "Then came the first saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds." Doubtless he had taken it to the "bank" of some money-lender who had invested it with such success that the principal, plus the periodic interest, had increased tenfold.

The nobleman was very pleased with the faithfulness of his servant and rewarded him most handsomely. This first servant may well represent the first apostles and the great leaders of the work of God down the ages who, by the grace given them, have mightily advanced the cause of Christ's kingdom.

When the second servant was called, he too showed a good return for his work, though quantitatively his return was not so great as that of the first servant to be called. "Lord," he said, "thy pound hath gained five pounds."

This man represents the multitude of souls who, by reason of their lesser capacity, may not have been great preachers or great missionaries, but who nevertheless have faithfully used the opportunities which have come to them to share their faith. Such will receive commendation from their Lord as did the second servant and be rewarded with commensurate responsibilities in the kingdom.

Presumably the others came one by one and were duly rewarded for their service, symbolizing the multitude of nameless followers of Christ who have faithfully witnessed for Him in obscurity.

There was, however, one servant who brought a sad report to the king. "Lord," he began, "behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin: for I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow."

More sad than angry the nobleman replied, "Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant." You say, "Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow: wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?"

If indeed his accusation had been true some effort on his part was the only wise course. By making no attempt to appease such a master he was surely inviting trouble. But really the nobleman was not at all like that. He was only too ready to reward generously his servants regardless of the profit they returned to him if only they applied themselves devotedly to his service.

When the lazy servant's excuses were shown to be utterly hollow he was speechless. The nobleman, therefore, pronounced sentence upon him. To the officers who were standing by he said, "Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds. For I say unto you, That unto every one that hath shall be given, and from him that hath not [used], even that he hath shall be taken away from him."

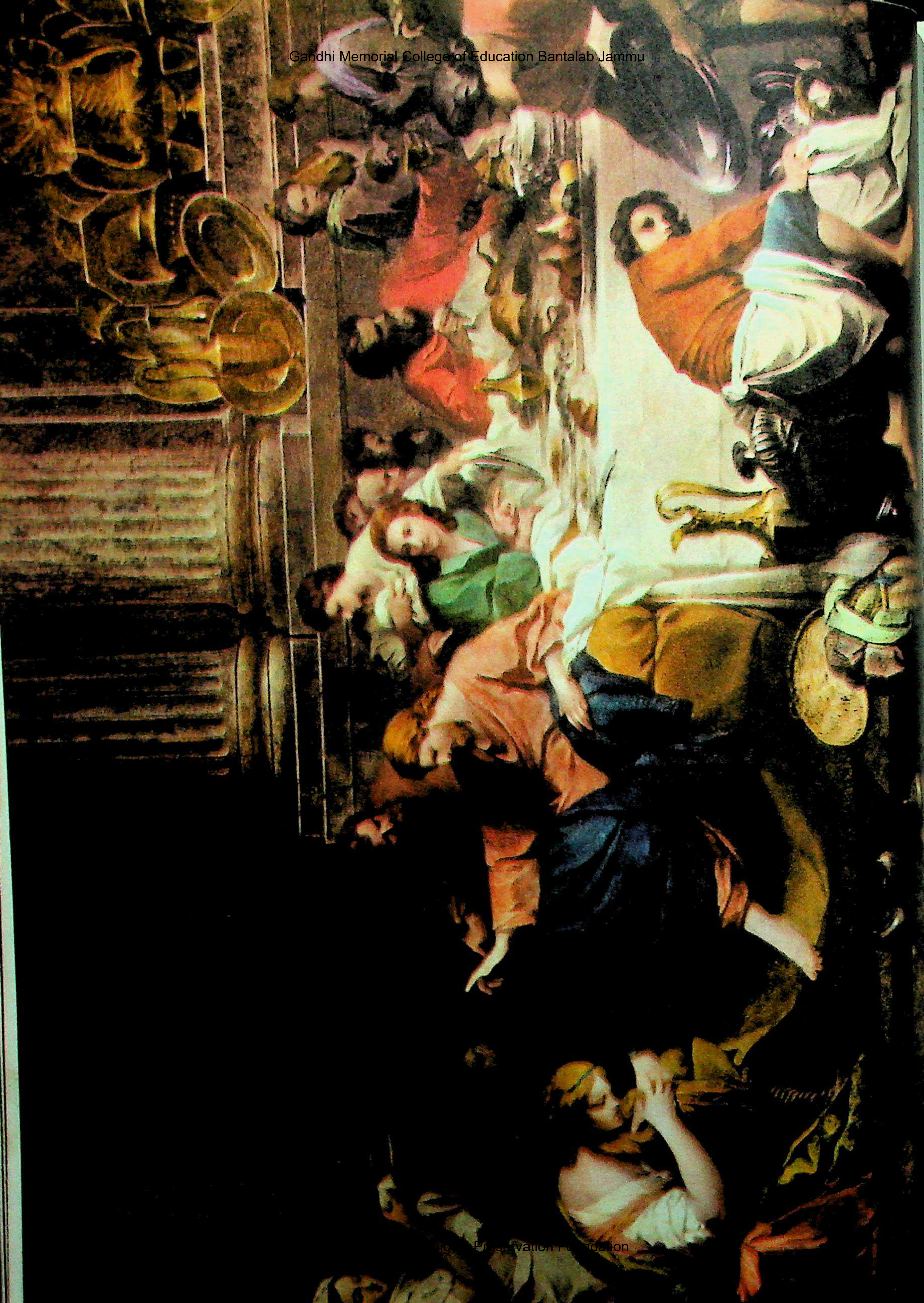
In one of his letters Paul declares, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful," and in this parable Jesus portrays very clearly the approbation and reward for the faithful "stewards of the manifold grace of God" and also the disapproval and disgrace which will be the portion of those who fail to dispense the rich treasure committed to their trust.

The largeness or limitation of our capacity is not the basis of God's judgment. If we are faithful in a "very little" our reward will be sure. What Jesus cannot overlook, and will judge, is our "neglect" of the "gift" that is in us.

Ending His parable, Jesus finally warned His enemies who were at that very time scheming to denounce Him to Cæsar and secure His death, that their evil plans would fail and their disloyalty would recoil upon their own heads. "Bring" them "hither, and slay them before Me" will be the dread sentence which will fall from the lips of the Saviour-King, in the day of His triumph, against all who have rejected Him and despised His salvation.

Sad to say, the wicked rulers of the Jews were blind to the warning of the parable, and continued to elaborate their plots to destroy Jesus, oblivious of the fearful judgment they were thereby laying up for themselves.

This chapter is based on Luke 19:11-28.



CHAPTER SIX

At Simon's Feast

As Sabbath, the eighth of Nisan, six days before the Passover, drew on, Jesus reached Bethany. The pilgrims who had no relatives or friends in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem set up camp for themselves on the nearby slopes of the Mount of Olives, but for Jesus there was always a comfortable room in the house of Mary and Martha and Lazarus.

On this occasion He was especially welcome, for when He had come two months earlier it was to a house of sorrow. Now, through the miracle Jesus wrought, Lazarus was alive and well and helping in the preparation to receive Jesus.

During the Sabbath, though great crowds gathered to see Jesus, He did not engage in any public ministry. Most of the day He spent in meditation and prayer, preparing Himself for the supreme ordeal which awaited Him.

In the evening after the Sabbath, however, Jesus did accept an invitation to dine with Simon the Pharisee, who also lived in Bethany, and whom Jesus had healed of leprosy. Through this miracle Simon had become a friend of Jesus, though he was not yet persuaded that He was the Messiah. When he heard that Jesus was staying in the village he naturally invited Him to a meal. As he knew Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, he invited them, too, as well as the disciples. He also took the opportunity to ask some of his Pharisee friends, who had criticized his friendship with Jesus, so that they might meet Him on more intimate terms than in His public ministry.

When it was known that Jesus was at Simon's house a great concourse of people made their way there in the hope of seeing and hearing Him, and also to get a glimpse of Lazarus whose restoration to life was the sensation of the district.

Mary anoints the feet of Jesus at the feast in the home of Simon the Pharisee.
By TIBALDI

As the guests took their places at the table Jesus was, of course, given the seat of honour. Simon sat on His right hand and most likely Lazarus was placed on His left.

As usual, Martha had offered to help with the meal, but Mary stood by the door watching Jesus as He talked with His host and the other guests. Perhaps as Martha passed she chided her sister again for not helping. Little did she realize, however, the memorable part that Mary was to play on this occasion.

The meal had been proceeding for some little time when Mary moved toward the head of the table, drawing from her bosom as she went a small long-necked alabaster cosmetic vase full of spikenard or pure oil of nard, one of the most precious perfumes of the ancient East. It was an essence, something like myrrh, derived from the roots and blossoms of a fragrant herb which grew in the mountains of Syria and high up in the Himalayas of India. The Indian nard, because of its rarity and the long distance it was brought, was the most expensive. Only the rich could afford to buy it for cosmetic purposes or to perfume special sacrifices.

Unnoticed by the feasting guests, Mary reached the divan where Jesus reclined on His left elbow with His feet, from which He had removed His sandals at the beginning of the meal, extended backward away from the table. Quietly breaking the long neck of the vase Mary proceeded to pour some of the ointment upon the head of Jesus and the rest upon His feet. Then, laying aside the empty vessel, she knelt to kiss His feet in token of her deep love and devotion. As tears of uncontrollable emotion fell upon Jesus' feet she loosed the braid which held up her long hair and began to wipe them with the beautiful tresses. Soon the exquisite perfume was spreading across the room, alerting the whole company to Mary's loving deed.

When the guests recovered from their amazement, a babel of discussion broke out as to the propriety of her act. Judas, who was sitting near Jesus, leaned over and remonstrated with Him for permitting such "waste." "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence," he said, "and given to the poor?" If she was wealthy enough to buy such expensive ointment, she could surely have used her money better in the giving of alms.

As the disciples, to whom three hundred pence was a small fortune, listened to the conversation, they nodded approval of what seemed to them a very proper criticism. It was not, however, thrift or any special love for the poor which led Judas to speak as he did. His plea was only a cover for his secret covetousness. He would have liked the three hundred pence to have been deposited in the common purse, which was in his keeping, so that he could have helped himself to it. For, unknown to the disciples who held him in high esteem for his business acumen, "he was a thief."

This revelation concerning Judas may lead some to wonder why Jesus ever allowed him to become the purse-bearer. The probability is that it was the disciples who chose Judas, as the most business-minded among them, and Jesus could not have questioned their choice without indicating that He distrusted him. So He allowed Judas to accept this responsibility as a test of his desire to overcome his besetting sin.

Distressed at Judas's accusation of extravagance and waste, Mary arose hastily to leave the room, but Jesus motioned her to remain. He had read the mind of Judas and could have exposed him before the disciples, but in His longsuffering patience He did not. Instead, He said quietly, "The poor always ye have with you: but Me ye have not always."

There would be plenty of opportunities in the future for self-denial and benevolence toward the poor, but what Mary had done in His honour was something for which there would not be opportunity much longer. Her action was not a misdirected "waste," but eminently timely.

In Jesus' reply to Judas there is sound counsel for us today on avenues of Christian benevolence. Sometimes gifts for the beautifying the house of God or the enhancement of its worship are subject to the same criticism as was levelled against Mary. In such cases the answer of Jesus is equally relevant. The poor stand in as great need of the help of the church as in Jesus' day and should be generously treated, but it is not waste or extravagance to give gifts for the ennobling and beautifying of God's sanctuary. He is deserving of our best gifts, and it is entirely proper that we should worship Him in the beauty of holiness, provided that we have due regard also for the needy and suffering. Both objects should have their proper place in the hearts of God's people.

But Jesus had more to say to Judas. "Why trouble ye the woman?" He went on, "for she hath wrought a good work upon Me." "Against the day of My burying hath she kept this," and now "she is come aforehand to anoint My body to the burying."

Of all the followers of Jesus, only Mary had taken seriously His many references to His approaching death; and feeling that no sacrifice for Him would be too great, she had purchased and set aside this precious ointment. In that sad day, of which He spoke, she could at least show the love she bore Him by perfuming His dead body as a last token of respect.

But now there was so much excited talk about Jesus proclaiming Himself King that she did not know what to do. If He was going to be King she wanted to be the first to honour Him with the oil of anointing. So she decided to take the bottle with her to Simon's house, and as she watched Him the impulse came overwhelmingly upon her to use the ointment there and then.

Jesus read all this in Mary's heart and in His words of reproof to Judas He told her that He recognized and accepted her great love. At His birth He had received a gift of myrrh, and now again just before His death Mary had given Him a similar gift symbolic of His suffering and death on behalf of a sinful race. The fragrant memory of her deed He would carry with Him to the cross.

More than that, He added, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." Far from being a "waste," the perfume of her self-sacrifice would spread through the world to inspire countless souls to similar self-surrender and dedication.

If Judas was indignant at Mary's "waste," Simon was embarrassed by the incident. He well knew the reason for Mary's weeping, and the fact that Jesus accepted her gift without any reference to her past life perplexed him.

"This Man," he said to himself, "if He were a [lit. 'the'] prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth Him: for she is a sinner." Jesus answering the unspoken thought, leaned across to the Pharisee, and said, "I have somewhat to say unto thee."

"Master, say on," Simon responded immediately. "There was a certain creditor [or money lender] which had two debtors," Jesus began: "the one owed five hundred pence [about £18], and the other fifty [about £2]. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell Me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

Wondering what Jesus was implying, Simon answered cautiously, "I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most."

"Thou hast rightly judged," Jesus replied, and pointing to Mary He said to the Pharisee, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest Me no water for My feet: but she hath washed My feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed [not only My head but also] My feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Out of his mouth Simon had condemned himself for his ingratitude just as Nathan caused David to pronounce judgment on himself for his sin. Simon's healing had not been followed by a reformation of character, and his gratitude for physical restoration was nothing like the profound experience that had come to Mary. Consequently, when Jesus came to Simon's house he was more consumed by pride at the honour he was doing Jesus than conscious of the gratitude he should have had toward Him.

Between Simon and Mary it was very clear who loved Jesus more and who had the deeper consciousness of sins forgiven. Turning to Mary, Jesus said tenderly, "Thy sins are forgiven."

We are not told how Simon reacted to the reproof, but we would like to think that this time he experienced a real conversion and gave himself unreservedly to Christ. His priestly friends, however, seized on Jesus' assurance to Mary and said among themselves, "Who is this that forgiveth sins also?" Here was further evidence which they must remember in order to accuse Jesus.

But Jesus took no notice of the whispered criticisms, and as Mary turned to go He said assuringly to her, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:6-13; Luke 7:36-50; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-9.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Betrayal Plot

WHEN Jesus retired to Perea after the raising of Lazarus, the chief priests issued an injunction "that if any one knew where He were, he should show it, that they might take Him."

Doubtless it was in response to this order that the priests who had seen Jesus at Simon's house hurried over the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem with the report that He was in Bethany and that crowds were flocking to see Him. They went straight to the palace of Caiaphas near the temple, and when the high priest heard the news he at once convened a meeting of all the available members of the Sanhedrin. The fact that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were not there suggests that they were not told because of their known sympathies with Jesus.

At their last meeting Caiaphas had told the Sanhedrin that Jesus must be dealt with summarily before He started a popular rising and brought upon them the wrath of the Romans. The latest news from Bethany convinced them that there was now no time to lose. Jesus was coming to the feast, and already excitement was rising. They must apprehend Him without delay and Lazarus must die also, for as long as he was alive he would be an incontrovertible witness to the power of Jesus.

The one difficulty was that they dared not arrest Jesus openly during the feast. There would be too many people around whom He had helped, and His fellow Galileans would certainly rise up in His defence. They were regretfully coming to the conclusion that it would be better to wait till after the Passover crowds had departed, when their discussions were interrupted by the announcement of a visitor. As they turned to see who it was, Judas entered the room. He had followed the priests out of Simon's house furious at the reproof of Jesus, and hearing them say that they were going to the high priest in Jerusalem, he had followed, determined now to do what he had been contemplating for a long time, namely, to force Jesus to declare Himself or finally break with Him.

When Judas first joined the disciple band he had hoped that Jesus would quickly proclaim Himself the Messiah, expel the Roman usurpers, and set up His kingdom. In it he counted on getting a good position for himself. But ever since Jesus refused the kingship after the feeding of the five thousand he had become more and more impatient of His slowness to manifest Himself.

When, soon after they crossed the Jordan on their way to the Passover, Jesus had once again begun to warn the disciples of His approaching sufferings and death, Judas decided that there was no longer any purpose in staying by Him, and the sooner he got out of this embarrassing association the safer it would be for him. He now only wanted an excuse to sever his connection.

His opportunity came with the reproof Jesus administered at Simon's feast. Judas finally surrendered himself to the promptings of the evil one and was impelled irresistibly on to the supreme treachery. Says the record, "Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot."

Well may we be warned by the tragic experience of Judas. Satan is ever lying in wait to "enter into" unwary souls to beguile them into sin. Biding a favourable opportunity, he entered into Eve and led her to commit the first transgression. He entered into Ananias and caused him to lie to Peter and the Holy Ghost. His spirit is constantly working in "the children of disobedience," driving them mercilessly to destruction. But we need not be ignorant of his devices. If, in the strength of the Lord, we "resist the devil," as James tells us, he will "flee" from us defeated. Judas did not resist the devil. He yielded to his promptings again and again in petty pilfering, words of criticism, and acts of disloyalty against Jesus, until at last he passed completely into his power.

As soon as the priests who had seen Judas at Simon's house recognized him, they introduced him to the others. Asked why he, a disciple of Jesus, had come to them, Judas explained that he had become increasingly sceptical of His claims and had decided to dissociate himself from Jesus. Indeed, he said, he was now prepared to help them to secure His arrest and condemnation.

When the Sanhedrin heard this "they were glad." The help of Judas altered the whole situation. It would not now be necessary to wait until after the feast, for he knew the movements of Jesus and could lead them to Him when the multitude were not around. So they gladly "covenanted to give him money" to commit this treacherous act.

Judas readily accepted their offer. He had followed Jesus in the hope of a tangible reward for his services. Now he had decided to change sides, he might as well make as much out of it as he could.

But if Judas thought that he was going to receive a handsome reward for his treachery, he was mistaken, for the rulers were as mean as himself. In the estimation of the chief priests Jesus was an impostor and the price for apprehending Him should be no more than the price of a slave. So "they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver," or shekels, from the temple treasury, a mere four pounds in our currency.

How truly the apostle wrote when he declared that He who was "equal with God" took upon Himself the "form of a slave," for the price set upon His head was precisely that of a slave. And in agreeing to accept this payment, Judas fulfilled two other prophecies concerning His betrayal. David had declared that his greater Son would be betrayed by His "own familiar friend" and Judas was, as the Record significantly says, "one of the twelve." Now he fulfilled the word of Zechariah who, by inspiration, declared, "So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver." What a price Judas received in exchange for his soul!

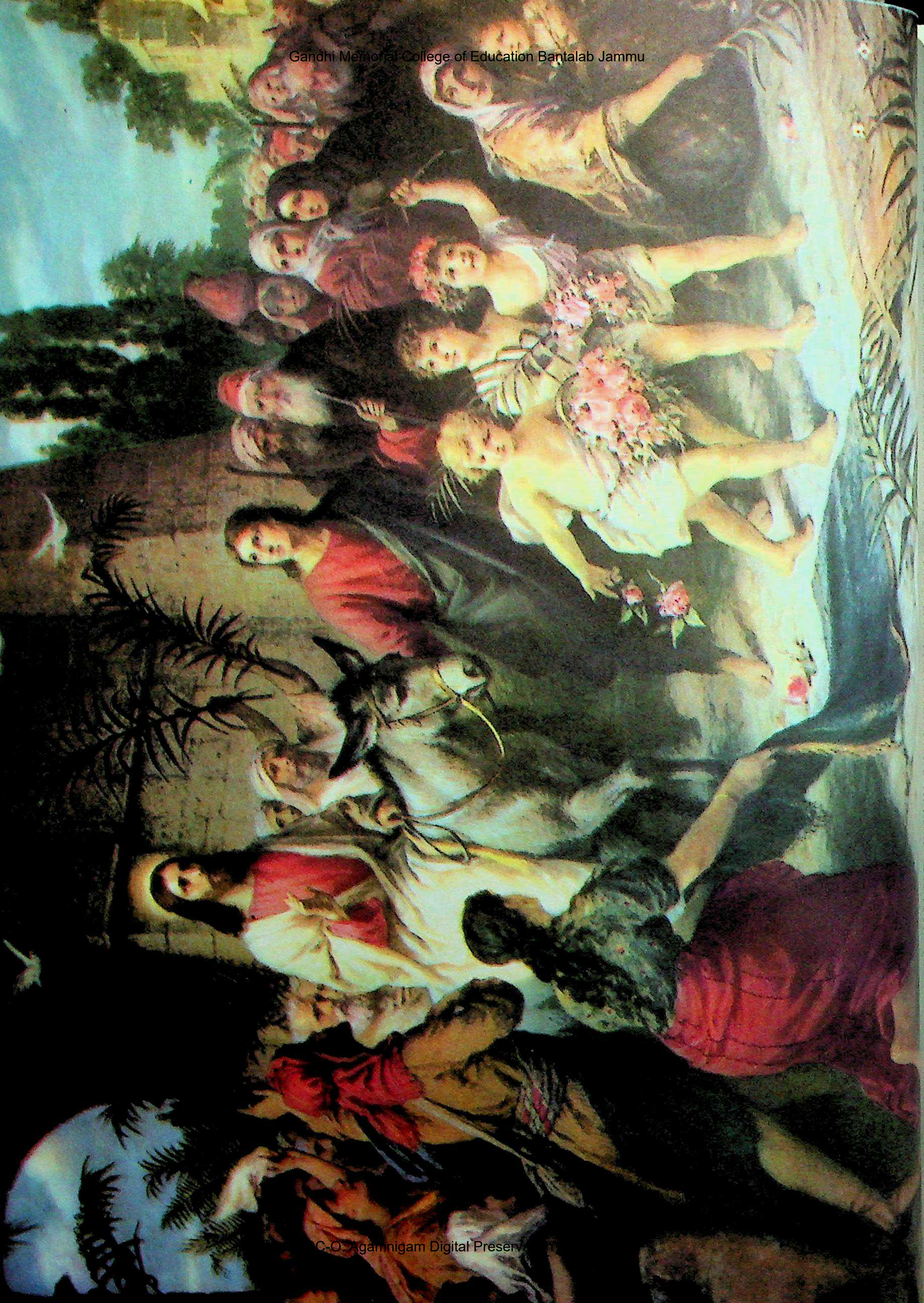
Whether he imagined that Jesus would not allow Himself to be taken we can never know. It may be that as a last resort he intended to try to force Jesus' hand and compel Him to reveal His power. Then he could go back to Him and say that he did it with the best of intentions in his desire for the coming of the kingdom. The fact that he committed suicide when his plan went awry, would suggest that he never foresaw that such a tragedy would happen.

When the terms of the betrayal had been fixed the priests raised the question as to when Judas would deliver Jesus into their hands. It must not be on "the feast day," they told him, "lest there be an uproar of the people." Judas agreed and proposed that he should bring them to Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane where He was wont to go by night with His disciples to pray. This entirely satisfied the priestly plotters and they arranged to meet Judas again two days before the feast, to finalize on the plan.

Little did they realize as they dispersed that their altered plans would synchronize with still another prophecy "which must needs be" fulfilled. For now His arrest and condemnation would bring about His death at precisely the time of the sacrifice of the paschal lamb. Antitype would meet type at the high moment of the Passover feast, and the most fateful prophecy of all Scripture would be fulfilled to the letter and on time.

Meanwhile Judas hurried back to Bethany to rejoin the disciples before they had time to suspect the terrible deed he was about to commit.

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16; Mark 14:1, 2, 10, 11; Luke 22:1-6; John 12:10, 11.



CHAPTER EIGHT

Thy King Cometh

AFTER the feast in Simon's house, Jesus returned to the home of His friends Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, and the next morning He rose early to go to Jerusalem. It was now the ninth of the Hebrew month Nisan and the Passover crowds were multiplying daily. On the morrow the Passover lambs would be selected in preparation for the climax of the feast on the fourteenth of the month.

On previous occasions when Jesus went up to the temple, He had walked unobtrusively among the crowds to the place where He usually taught, but on this occasion He acted quite differently. The time had almost come in the outworking purpose of His earthly life for His redemptive ministry to culminate on the cross of Calvary. But before He paid the supreme sacrifice it was necessary that He, whom John had described as the "Lamb of God," should be conclusively identified with the Messiah-King of Israel. So, when the disciples joined Him at the house of Lazarus, He bade two of them, possibly Peter and John, go on a special errand for Him to the nearby village of Bethphage.

The location of this place is not now precisely known, but from its name, which means, "the house of unripe figs," it must have stood among the fig orchards which covered the upper slopes of the Mount of Olives, somewhere to the north-west of Bethany. A twelfth century pilgrim placed it about a mile up the slope between Bethany and the summit of the mountain, and there is still to be found on this spot the ruins of an ancient church and the so-called Stele of Bethphage, on the four sides of which are pictured the momentous events enacted here and in Bethany.

"Go your way into the village over against you," Jesus bade the disciples, and "as soon as ye be entered into it . . . ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: . . . whereon never man sat; . . . Loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if

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Accompanied by the rejoicing crowds, Jesus makes His triumphal entry into Jerusalem.
By B. PLOCKHORST

any man say unto you, Why do ye this? say ye that the Lord hath need of him; and straightway he will send him hither."

Obediently the disciples went to the village and just as Jesus had said, they found an ass and its colt tethered outside the gate of a house which stood at the junction of the main road into the village and a side road. This was most unusual, for the owners of such animals would normally tie them up in the inner courtyard for safety and convenience.

At once the disciples knew that these were the animals Jesus meant and they began to loose the colt. As they did so the owner of the animals came out and said, "Why loose ye the colt?" As they had been told, the disciples replied, "The Lord hath need of him." And without further demur the owner let them lead the colt away with the mother trotting along behind.

Reading this remarkable story it is natural to wonder whether the owner of the animals knew Jesus and whether even a prior arrangement had been made with him. Of this we cannot be sure, but the fact that when the disciples said, "The Lord hath need of him," the man seemed to know at once who the "Lord" was, suggests that he may have been one of Jesus' followers. In this case he would be only too happy to be of service to his Master. So just as Jesus at His birth was laid in a borrowed cradle, one of His last journeys to Jerusalem was taken upon a borrowed mount. He who owns all things could rightfully have claimed anything He wanted, but always He found His greatest joy in asking and receiving the willing help of the lowliest of His followers.

When they got back to Bethany, the disciples, for lack of trappings of royal purple which were their Master's due, took off their own outer garments, and placed them on the back of the colt. On them Jesus took His seat and the little party set off on the road to Jerusalem.

There had been much discussion, both among the rulers of the Jews and the people, as to whether Jesus would show Himself at this feast of the Passover; and so, when the crowds of pilgrims who were streaming into Bethany saw the cavalcade moving off toward the city, they began excitedly to acclaim Him.

Doubtless, the majority of the crowd were Galileans who had followed Jesus up the road from Jericho, and it was a source of great satisfaction to them that they could acclaim the great Prophet as a fellow countryman. Many were men and women whom Jesus had healed of crippling diseases and who for the first time for years were able to come up to Jerusalem for the feast. Among them, too, were healed lepers who never imagined that they would be able to mingle freely with the Passover crowds again.

To us it seems almost unbelievable that such sincere and joyous acclamations could be turned in but a few days to bitter cries of "Crucify Him." Nor need we suppose that these rejoicing crowds ever turned against their Benefactor and Friend. It is much more likely that their acclaiming voices were drowned at the last by the Jewish rabble of Jerusalem, who held no brief for the Galilean, and were easily inflamed by the jealous priests into demanding His condemnation and death.

Some of the crowd now ran ahead of Jesus and spread their garments in the road for the colt to pass over, while others picked up palm fronds and small leafy branches lying in the fields, and strewed them in the way or waved them at His approach.

By these acts the people showed clearly how they regarded Jesus, for this was the oriental way of paying homage to kings and men of high estate. When Jehu was called to the kingship of Israel, the people "hasted and took every man his garment, and put it under him on the top of the stairs . . . saying, Jehu is king."

In Israel, palm branches were a symbol of joy and victory, and in the Revelation the saints are pictured as marching in triumph to the heavenly Zion with palms in their hands.

Only a little while before, the Pharisees had threatened that any who acclaimed Jesus as the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue, but this was forgotten in the excitement of the hour. Led by the disciples, who in spite of what Jesus had said about His sufferings and death, were sure He was about to proclaim Himself David's greater Son, the crowds began to chant in ecstasy the words of two of the Messianic victory psalms: "Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord. . . . Blessed is the king of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord. . . . Hosanna in the highest."

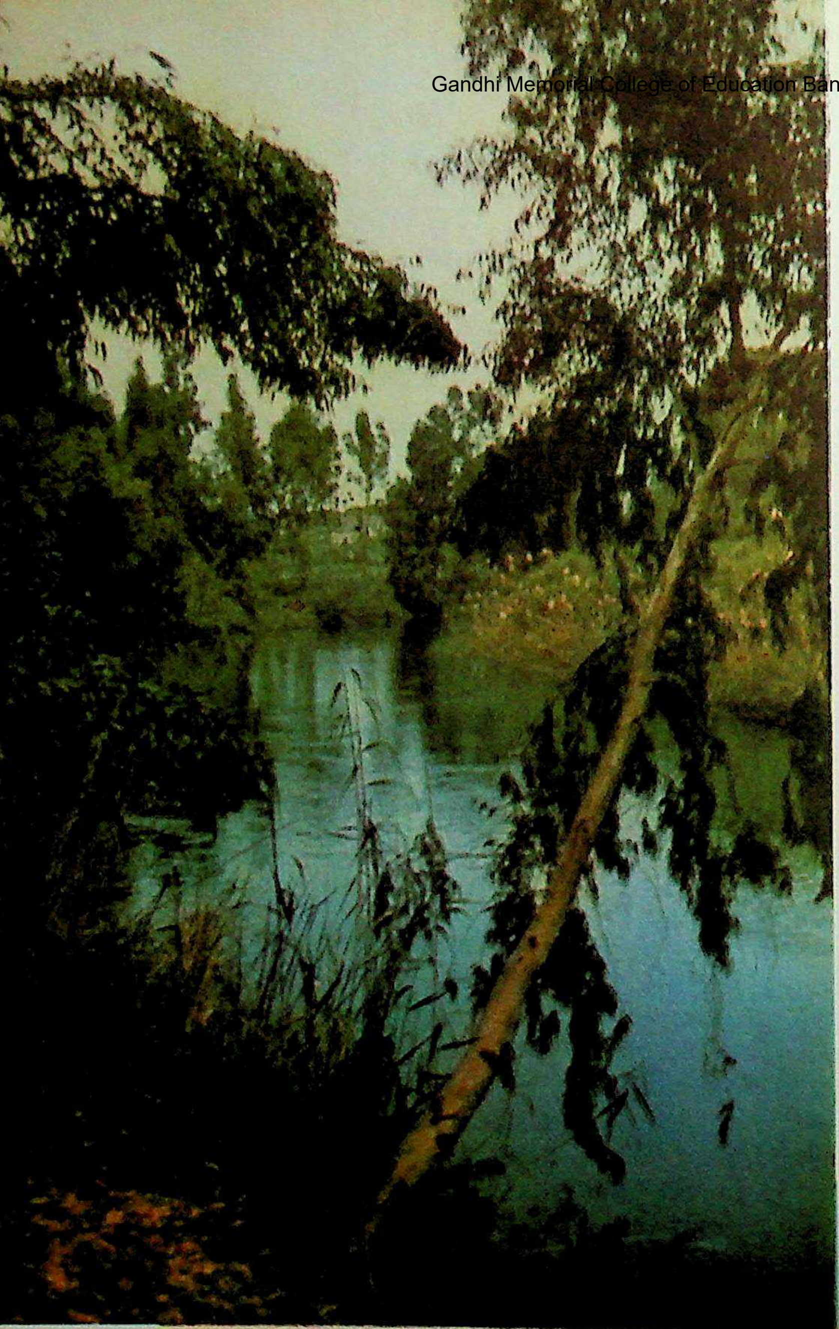
While the people did not realize it, and even the disciples did not at the time connect these events with Messianic prophecy, all this was a fulfilment to the very letter of what Zechariah had foretold before. "Fear not, daughter of Zion," he wrote, "behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt."

The Jews had always believed that when Messiah appeared it would be with a great show of kingly might, but Zechariah had clearly told them to look for Him at His first appearance not upon a war horse in pomp and magnificence, but upon the gentle colt of an ass in token of His mission of salvation and peace.

The colt of an ass may seem a very insignificant, even incongruous, mount for Jesus on this occasion, but in the East asses of noble breeding and stately appearance were commonly used by persons of high estate on peaceful missions in contrast to the horses and chariots of military occasions. It was therefore entirely appropriate that such an animal should be used by the King-Messiah to symbolize His mission of redemptive grace.

The fact that the colt had never been ridden before likewise linked the One it bore with the unblemished sacrificial animals of the sanctuary services "upon which never came yoke." One day soon, however, the Revelator tells us, when Jesus appears again as King of kings and Lord of lords to inaugurate His kingdom of glory, He will manifest His sovereignty by riding out of the heavens on a "white horse" to the sound of trumpets and with a vast retinue of holy angels.

When the Pharisees witnessed the excitement of the multitude and heard the



LEFT

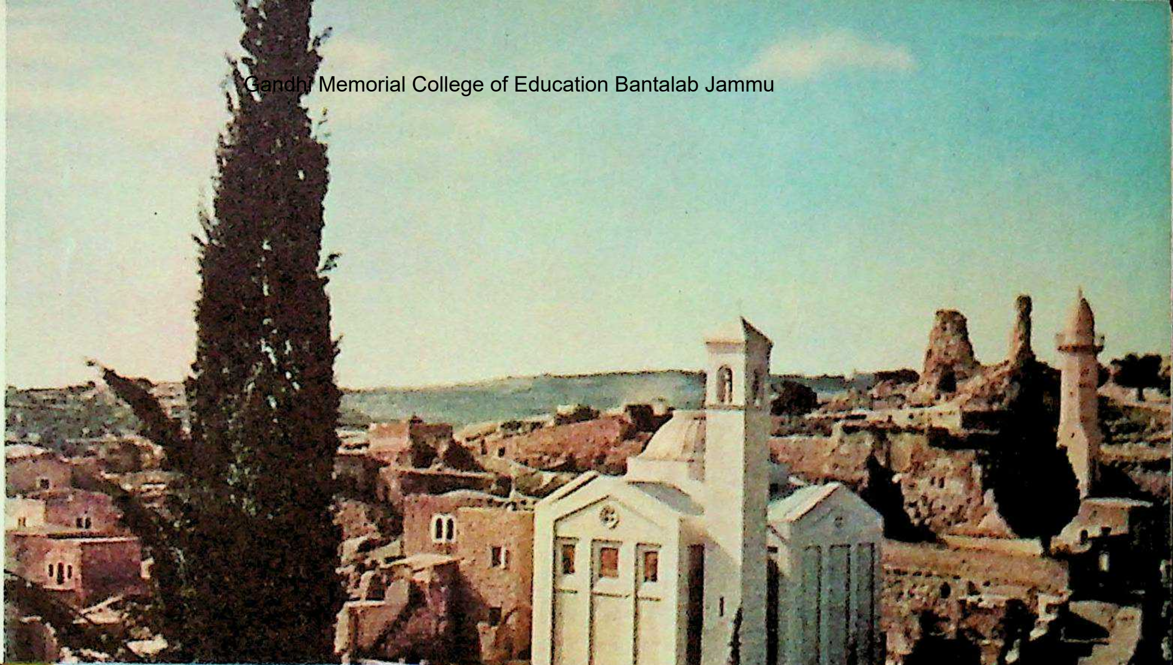
Tropical vegetation lines the banks of the River Jordan as it nears the Dead Sea. Not far from here Jesus crossed the river on His last journey to Jerusalem.

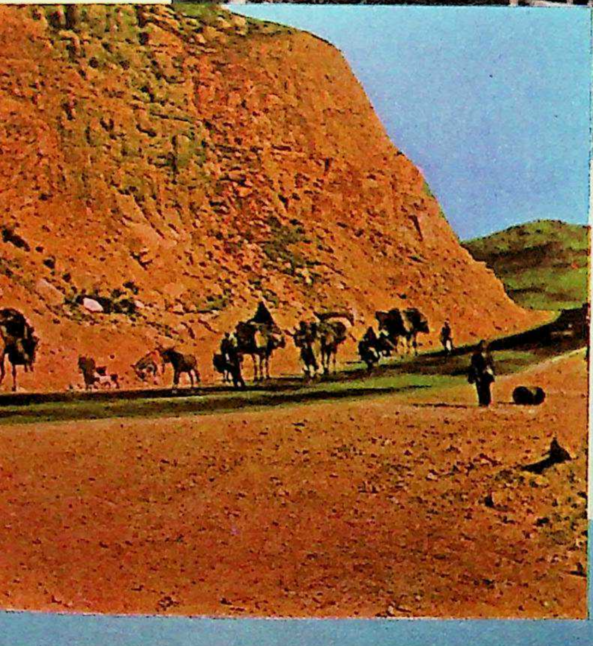
BELOW

From the Plain of Jordan the old road ascends through the wilderness of Judea to the capital. At Passover time it was thronged with pilgrims going up to the feast.

CENTRE

A caravan of laden camels from Transjordan going up the Jericho Road.



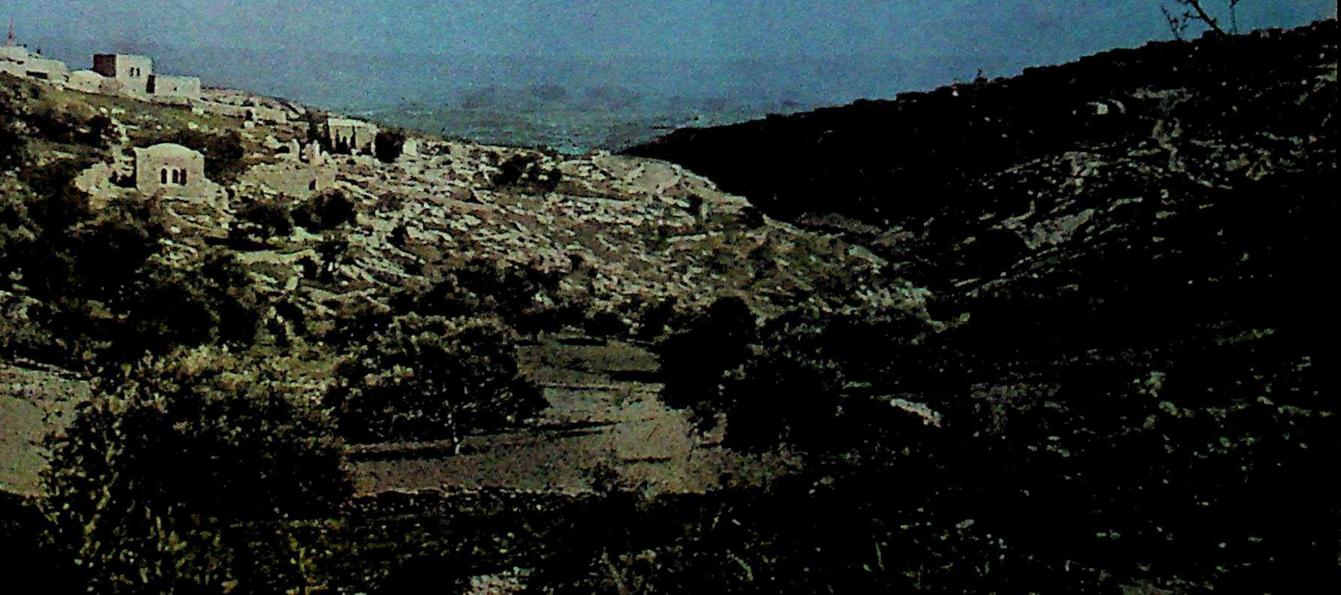


ABOVE

This church marks the traditional spot in the village of Bethany from whence Jesus began His triumphal ride to Jerusalem.

BELOW

The village of Bethany nestling on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives. Over the crest of the ridge lies the city of Jerusalem.



ascriptions which they applied to Jesus, they were angry and alarmed. They were angry at the popularity of Jesus and they were alarmed that the Romans might think the commotion foreshadowed a revolt. They knew they were impotent to quieten the crowd themselves and so they appealed to Jesus. "Master, rebuke Thy disciples," they remonstrated. But Jesus replied, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." This acclamation was a fulfilment of prophecy and a final witness to the rulers and people of Jerusalem that they were about to reject their rightful King.

There were three routes from Bethany over the ridge of Olivet, as there are today. One lay between the central and northern summits of the mountain, the second on which Bethphage probably lay, ran over the highest point of the ridge; while the third, always the main road, followed the easiest ascent between the Mount of Olives and what is now called, though incorrectly, the Mount of Offence.

By the time the procession reached the summit ridge it was early afternoon, and as Jesus began the sharp descent into the Kidron Valley, the city of Jerusalem came into view in a blaze of April sunshine. Lying some three hundred feet below and half a mile away across the valley, the city must have been a wonderful sight with its mighty walls, the marble palace of Herod, the spreading suburbs and green gardens, all dominated by the glistening white towers, porticos, and courts of the temple, and the gilded façade and roof of the inner sanctuary.

But Jesus was not moved by the breath-taking beauty of the scene. He was overcome with sorrow that the inhabitants of Zion failed to recognize that the great Antitype of the temple sacrifices had come among them. Jerusalem was about to reject its Redeemer and King and was drawing upon itself the inevitable retribution of utter destruction. Once the glory of the nations, Jesus realized that Jerusalem's doom was now sealed, and to the amazement of the crowds, whose acclamations were suddenly hushed into silence, Jesus "wept" for the glorious city and its unheeding inhabitants.

"If thou hadst known," He cried, "even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation."

Just under forty years later, in A.D. 70, this prophecy was fulfilled to the letter when the city was stormed and taken by the Roman general, Titus.

After sorrowfully beholding the city, Jesus continued His way down into the defile of the Kidron Valley, noting again the innumerable whitened sepulchres of the Jews to which He once compared the fair exterior but wicked heart of the Pharisees.

By this time the crowds in Jerusalem had seen the excited multitudes in the distance and had begun to stream across the valley to join them. Many of these were Jews newly come to Jerusalem from distant lands for the Passover feast, and when they inquired as to what the commotion was about they were told, "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

As the rulers of the Jews saw the two streams of people mingle around Jesus their fury and alarm knew no bounds. "Perceive ye," they said to one another, "how ye prevail nothing? behold, the world is gone after Him." And their fears were now heightened that Jesus might accept a crown at the hands of the people and precipitate a fatal revolt against the Romans. But they need not have feared. One day indeed Jesus would sit upon the throne of His father David, but that time was not yet. Now He was the King of grace, and His triumphant progress was to Calvary not to the throne.

Crossing the Kidron, Jesus began the ascent toward the city, soon reaching the Shushan or Golden Gate, which gave access directly to the outer court of the temple. Here the guards restrained the crowds lest the tumult should spread into the temple itself, and Jesus was able to descend from His mount and slip quietly into the Court of the Gentiles.

We are not told what happened to the borrowed ass and colt, but we can be sure that when their purpose was fulfilled the disciples who had requisitioned the animals would take them safely back to their owner in Bethphage. As a matter of fact, the preferable rendering of the final words of the disciples to the owner is "and He will return them again."

Meanwhile, Jesus began to look around Him in the Court of the Gentiles. All was unusually quiet now as the excitement on the road from Bethany had drawn most of the crowds away. But Jesus looked with sorrow as He saw the telltale signs that the temple traders were there in full force again for this most profitable feast. He saw the tables of the money-changers stacked in the porticos, and the animal pens, now empty but which He knew on the morrow would be filled with bleating sheep and bellowing cattle. As He "looked round about upon all things," nothing escaping His piercing eye, His decision was made as to His first task the next morning.

Then, as the sun went down red over the towers of Herod's palace and the priests returned to their quarters to eat their portion of the day's sacrifices, Jesus slipped out of the Golden Gate again and returned with the disciples over the Mount of Olives.

He may have gone back to the home of Lazarus and his sisters, but as the night was warm and dry He may have chosen to spend it in some quiet spot on the mountain where He could prepare Himself for the ordeal that drew ever closer.

This chapter is based on Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44; John 12:12-19.

CHAPTER NINE

The Fig Tree That Withered

THE morning after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Jesus was again up very early and on His way to the city. He knew that multitudes of worshippers would be there at dawn to witness the morning sacrifice and to recite their "benedictions" in the temple courts. He was sure that the greedy temple traders would be there too, for this was the day when the Passover lambs were normally bought in preparation for the feast. So, eager to be about His Father's business, He did not even wait to eat before setting out.

This time Jesus was on foot, so He most likely took the shortest though steepest road directly over the summit of the Mount of Olives. His way passed through the fig orchards which covered the upper slopes of the mountain. At this season, as "the time of the figs was not yet," the trees were largely bare of leaf, though much of the fruit was already set, and hung green and unripe among the branches. According to the Talmud, in very early seasons it was possible for figs to be ripe enough to pluck during Passover, but usually the first crop was not ready before early June.

As Jesus walked along with His disciples, however, His eyes fell upon one tree growing near to the road, which, in contrast with those around, was in full leaf. To all appearance it was so far in advance of the other trees that it should have had some fruit well developed and ready for gathering.

Not having eaten before He set out, Jesus walked up to the tree intending to pluck a few figs as the law of Moses permitted to passing wayfarers. But when He stood beneath it and looked up among the branches He saw that there were no figs on it at all. By some unbalance of growth its strength had gone entirely into the production of leaves, leaving it completely barren of fruit. As Jesus turned

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Jesus turned His back on the barren fig tree and went on His way up the steep road.
By J. J. TISSOT

His back on the fruitless tree, He said, "Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever," and went on His way up the steep road.

Many have thought it strange that Jesus, who had invariably used His miraculous power to bless and save, should on this occasion employ it to inflict judgment, even if only upon a tree, and some have even dared to suggest that it was an unworthy display of impatience and vindictiveness.

But Jesus never acted like that. He was not impatient or vindictive on this occasion, nor when He wrought His only other penal miracle, the destruction of the Gadarene swine. In this instance the tree was manifestly useless. Already the processes of deterioration were far advanced, and sooner or later the owner of the orchard would cut it down because it was encumbering good ground. The tree was ripe for destruction. Jesus only hastened its doom to teach His disciples a solemn lesson.

At the time they did not attach much importance to the incident, thinking that Jesus was merely expressing His conviction that the tree would never bear. But when they passed the tree again the next morning, and saw that it was already withered and dead, they recalled the sentence Jesus had passed upon it and expressed surprise that its judgment had been so swift.

Jesus did not point to the obvious lesson of the parable, the inevitable doom of the nation or the individual who fails to glorify God. This He left to make its impact on the minds of the disciples when Jerusalem and the nation of Israel came to their end. Instead, He used it to remind them of the resources of power which would be at their disposal when they needed it in His cause.

"Verily I say unto you," He said, "If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain," and He waved His hand toward the summit of Olivet, "Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done."

Jesus was not, of course, suggesting that they would ever need to claim the power of God for such an end. He was drawing a contrast between one tree growing upon a mountain and the mountain itself to show that there was no limit to the power which they could command in His service. "All things," He assured them, "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." The magnitude of the request was of no consequence if they asked in faith and in harmony with His will.

This promise is for us today as much as it was for them back there. Through the prayer of faith mountains of difficulty will be removed from our path as we press on in the appointed way of God's purpose. "If ye shall ask any thing in My name," He promised His disciples on another occasion, "I will do it." With such a pledge, why do we so often fail to avail ourselves of the most potent spiritual power at our command?

Do not let God say reprovingly to us, "Ye have not, because ye ask not," but rather let us "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and may find grace to help" in every "time of need."

But this important lesson of faith was incidental to the main object Jesus had in mind when He cursed the fig tree, which was to emphasize to the disciples in a dramatic, visual way the prophecy of doom which He had pronounced upon Jerusalem only the day before.

Like this fig tree the nation of Israel had been planted, nurtured, and protected by God through the centuries in order that they might be His witnesses to the world. But instead of seeking to fulfil their divinely-given responsibility, the Jews had used all the advantages conferred on them, the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the promises, for their own selfish aggrandisement. They had made themselves a spectacle of ostentatious display by their rites and ceremonies, but they had failed to manifest the fruits of righteousness in their lives. They claimed to be the children of Abraham, but they did not do the works of Abraham. They produced an abundance of leaves, but no fruit. Indeed, as the barren tree betrayed its Creator, so the false pretensions of Israel blasphemed God before the nations instead of glorifying Him.

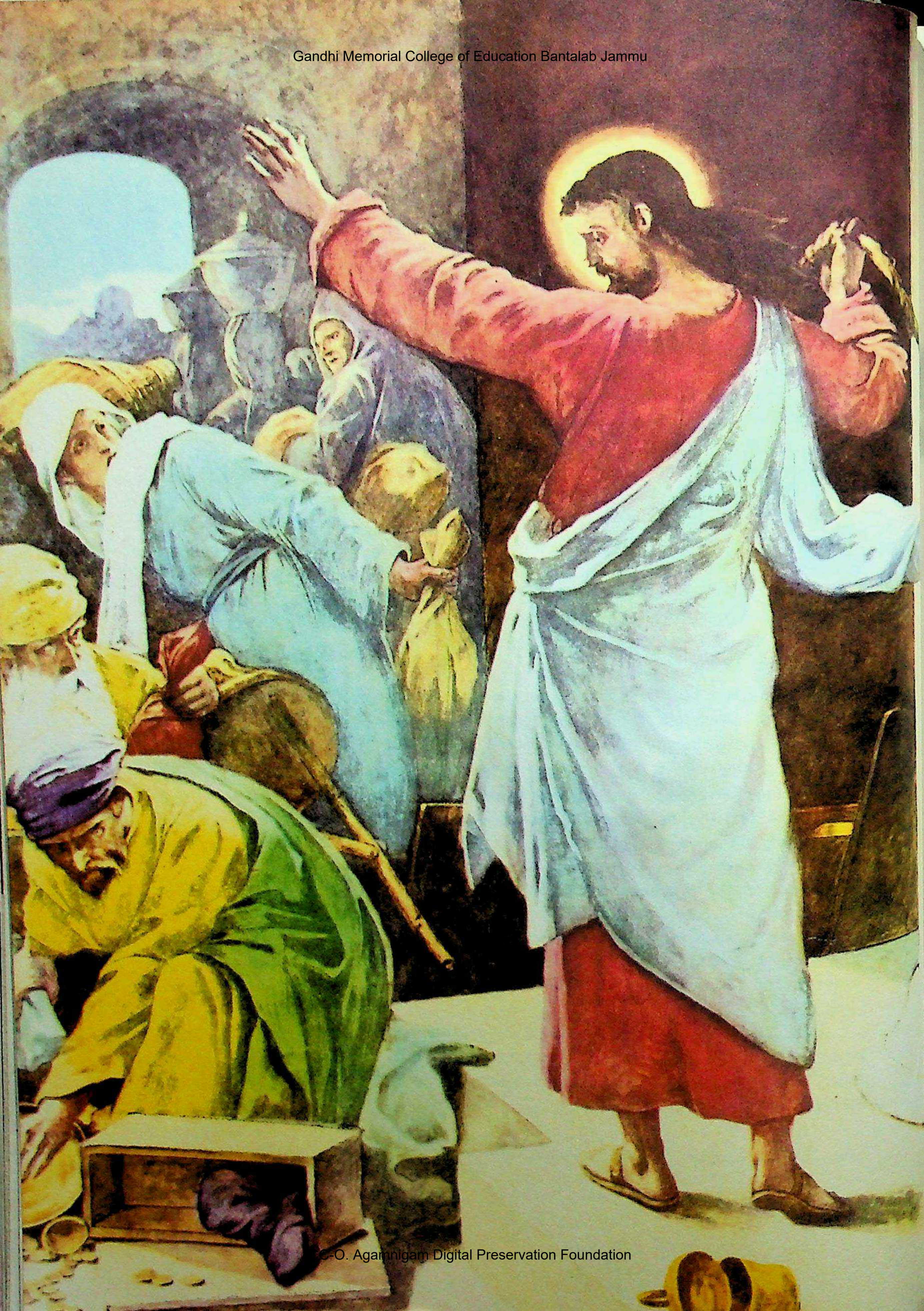
Time and again, as illustrated in the earlier parable of the fig tree, Israel was warned by the messengers of God that continued unfruitfulness would bring the patience of God to an end, but they went on heedlessly in complete disregard of their sacred responsibility to the world.

When Jesus beheld Jerusalem on the previous day He had foreshadowed its certain doom. Now He set forth visibly, in the withering of the fruitless tree, God's determined judgment on impenitent Israel. Just as inevitably and speedily would the barren nation wither and die under the curse of God.

But the warning was not only for national Israel. When God opened up another channel of blessing to the world through the church of spiritual Israel, its call was conditional upon its fulfilment of the divine purpose. The apostate church of the Middle Ages had to be rejected and superseded for the same reason as apostate Israel, and in the prophetic picture of the last days, judgment is pronounced also upon those who have "a form of godliness," but deny "the power thereof." The false pretensions of these make-believers of the last days will be exposed and they will suffer destruction when Christ comes in judgment; while the faith of the saved remnant will be revealed in the fruits of obedience to all the "commandments of God."

How important then is the lesson of this parable in these closing days of human probation. God grant that our lives may become as trees "planted by the rivers of water" and that our "leaf also shall not wither," but bear fruit to God's glory both here and in His eternal kingdom.

This chapter is based on Mark 11:12-14, 20-26; Matthew 21:18-22.



CHAPTER TEN

The Temple Cleansed Again

DESCENDING into the Kidron Valley after pronouncing sentence on the barren fig tree, Jesus mingled with the crowds going through the Golden Gate of the temple into the Court of the Gentiles.

Looking around He saw the temple traders already doing a brisk trade in sacrificial animals and birds, and this was also the last day for the purchase of the paschal lambs. Crowds were milling around the penned animals, the dove cages, and the stalls of meal, oil, and salt, and other ingredients for the sacrifices, while the clinking of coins at the tables of the money-changers told of the large amounts of money which were changing hands as the worshippers purchased their temple half-shekels for offerings.

In its proper place in the markets of the city, and even in the streets leading to the temple, this trading was entirely right and proper, as the majority of the worshippers came from a distance and relied on the local merchants to purchase their offerings and change their money for temple coinage. But it was sacrilegious to carry the buying and selling into the temple courts, and the practice was made worse, if that were possible, by the cheating and extortion to which the worshippers were subjected.

Besides the profaning of the outer court by the greedy traders, Jesus noticed also that the city porters had turned it into a thoroughfare, making it a short cut in carrying their burdens from one part of the city to another.

The heart of Jesus had been distressed by such scenes every time He had come to the temple, but as He had not interfered with the traders since the occasion, three years before, when He had driven them out, they thought that He had accepted the situation as He found it, and the market at this Passover was busier than ever.

But as His earthly ministry was drawing to a close Jesus was impelled for the last time to teach them the sanctity of God's house and of the symbols of His

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For the second time Jesus drove the greedy traders from the precincts of the temple.

By E. F. SKINNER

coming sacrifice. To their complete surprise, therefore, He walked straight across the court and began to drive out both "them that sold therein, and them that bought" and to overthrow "the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves." Likewise He turned back the porters who were crossing the court "and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple."

On the earlier occasion Jesus had simply said to the greedy merchants, "Make not My Father's house an house of merchandise," but this time, with the full Messianic authority of "Messenger of the covenant," which He had assumed in His triumphal entry the previous day, He cried, "Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves."

As the Gentiles were not permitted, on pain of death, to enter the temple proper, this "Court of the Gentiles" had been specially provided so that "the sons of the stranger" who desired "to join themselves to the Lord, to serve Him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be His servants," might come into His presence. Through this means the prophecy was to be fulfilled, "Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar; for Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."

How terrible it was, therefore, that the Sadducee temple authorities should permit traders to turn this "house of prayer for all people" not only into a common market but into a "den of thieves." How could the Gentiles be attracted to the worship of the true God in the midst of such profanity and pandemonium? If this was how the rulers of the Jews addressed themselves to the sacred responsibilities to the "nations," was it any wonder that God's patience was almost exhausted?

The news of Jesus' action travelled quickly through the temple and into the streets around, and it was not long before the blind and the lame and those afflicted with other maladies began to crowd in. Soon the court which had been filled with the din of buying and selling was resounding with the shouts of joy from sufferers restored at a touch or a word from Jesus.

By this time the rulers of the temple had been apprised of the happenings in the outer court and hurried to the scene. They were furious at Jesus' treatment of the traders who were there by their authorization and from whom they made much gain. They were also fearful that this signal demonstration of His authority might lead the people to proclaim Jesus Messiah and King there and then. Judge their surprise, therefore, when they found Jesus teaching quietly in the midst of an attentive crowd, while the children ran around crying, "Hosanna to the Son of David."

Finding no occasion in His gentle dignity to attack Him they could only bid Him, as they had done on the Kidron road, to rebuke the blasphemy of the children who saluted Him as "the Son of David." But Jesus replied that they were only acting in harmony with an age-old Messianic prophecy which, like all other prophecies "must needs be fulfilled." "Have ye never read," He asked them, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?"

The priests were chagrined by the suggestion that, because they had failed to recognize and give praise to God for Messiah, He had put His praise into the mouths of little children. But in their rage they could find no words to reply; nor for fear of the people who were "hanging on His lips," could they find "what they might do." Gnashing their teeth in anger they slunk away to their council chamber to think out how they might "utterly destroy" Him.

Left in peace, Jesus continued His work of healing and teaching until "even was come." Then once more He left the city and returned to Bethany.

The next day, the eleventh of Nisan, Jesus went into the temple to teach for the last time during His earthly ministry. To the end also the chief priests and elders dogged His footsteps, seeking to impede His work and amass evidence on which He could be condemned. The events of the past two or three days, His spectacular entry into the city, His second cleansing of the temple, His appropriation of the temple courts for His healing and teaching ministry, had completely undermined their authority as custodians of the temple. Their only hope now was to make a final attempt to humiliate Him before the people. So an imposing group of the temple rulers, including the chief priests, heads of the different courses of the priesthood, doctors of law, and other eminent members of the Sanhedrin, pushed their way through the crowds and confronted Him with the disdainful challenge, "By what authority doest Thou these things? and who gave Thee this authority?"

Their carefully thought out plan was that if Jesus refused to declare His authority they would call the temple guards and expel Him as an unauthorized person. If, on the other hand, Jesus openly claimed the authority of God, they could accuse Him of blasphemy. Furthermore, if He claimed to be David's Son they would be able to accuse Him to Pilate of sedition and inciting rebellion against the Roman authorities.

It is perhaps strange that, in setting this trap for Jesus, they did not recall their humiliation on the last occasion that they had demanded His credentials. Apparently they thought that the time for decisive action against Him could not longer be delayed. Jesus, however, was not to be taken so easily in their snare. Adopting a tactic common in rabbinical debates, He replied, "I also will ask you one thing, which if ye will tell Me, I in likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things."

Apprehensively they waited for His question. "The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men?" Jesus asked. This was a most disturbing subject for Jesus to introduce in public, and immediately there was a whispering among the rulers as to how they should reply.

"If we shall say, From heaven," they argued, "He will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?" for John had plainly testified that Jesus was the Messiah. "But and if we say, Of men; all the people will stone us; for they be persuaded that John was a prophet."

Eventually they decided not to involve themselves further in this question, and with their tongues in their cheeks, they replied, "We cannot tell."

It was bad enough for these recognized teachers of the people to have to confess themselves unable to appraise the work of so eminent a preacher as John, but they literally ground their teeth in frustration and anger when Jesus completed their discomfiture with the retort, "Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things."

Thinking to get away before they were further humiliated, the chief priests and elders were about to slip through the crowd when Jesus stopped them. They had chosen to challenge His authority in public, so in public they should be further shamed.

"What think ye?" Jesus said. "A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard." The young man replied, "I will not; but afterward he repented, and went."

"And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and he went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?" Jesus asked.

The rulers could not see where this simple parable was leading, and gave the obvious reply, "The first." Their faces coloured when in front of the whole crowd Jesus approved their reply and went on, "Verily, I say unto you, That the publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him."

The rulers thought that they had finished with the dilemma about John and his message, but now their attitude to him was publicly exposed and they were unfavourably contrasted with the publicans and sinners who had been converted and baptized by him. For all their fringes and phylacteries their profession was shown to be nothing more than a sham.

This shattering exposure of the hypocrisy of the Jewish rulers is not just an ancient story from the ministry of Jesus. It may well lead all who profess to follow the Lord to "examine" themselves to see whether they "be in the faith." For just as God sent a message through John to prepare the way for the first coming of Christ, so in the last days He is sending His final appeal of mercy in preparation for Christ's second coming. And, as in the parable, when Christ comes in His kingdom He will gather to Himself a multitude of erstwhile sinners who have responded to His call, while many of those who have made a great profession of godliness will be found wanting.

How important then that we learn the lesson of this significant parable that when Jesus comes in glory we may be found among God's true sons.

This chapter is based on Matthew 21:12-17, 23-32; Mark 11:15-19, 27-33; Luke 19:45-48, 20:1-8.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Israel's Doom Pronounced

THE temple rulers by now had had more than enough at the hands of Jesus and would have abruptly terminated their public disputation with Him, but hemmed in by the crowd they could not escape. So Jesus proceeded to tell another parable against them.

"A certain man," He said, "planted a vineyard, and set a hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country."

In a land of vineyards no more appropriate picture could have been chosen to illustrate God's care for Israel. The Psalmist had sung of Israel as a "vine out of Egypt." Isaiah described God's people as "a vineyard in a very fruitful hill," while Jeremiah portrayed them as a "noble vine, wholly a right seed." Every visitor to the temple was also reminded of the vine of Israel by the great carved vine in gold and silver twined around the entrance to the holy place.

In Jesus' story, like Isaiah's, the householder was God and the vineyard was Israel, planted by Him in the rich land of promise and hedged physically by mountain ranges, deserts, and the sea, and spiritually by His law and protecting providences.

The lookout tower is featured in both stories and may well represent the temple from which, by His Shekinah presence, God watched over the nation.

Jesus' version of the story, however, diverges from that of Isaiah in that special mention is made of the husbandmen to whom the vineyard was rented, because its purpose was to fix upon the rulers of the Jews the primary responsibility for the doom that was about to fall upon the nation.

When the rulers of Israel were made keepers of God's vineyard, He entered into a definite contract with them at Sinai to be His witnesses in the earth and they readily promised, "All that the Lord hath said will we do." So "when the time of fruit drew near" it was in order that God, the householder, should send "His servants to the husbandmen, that He might receive the fruits of it." The fruits He expected were fidelity and righteousness in the lives of His people, and a harvest of souls from among the Gentiles who had been led by their witness to worship and serve Jehovah. The time of God's first call may be thought of as following the great days of Solomon when his fame had gone out into all the earth and had attracted such monarchs as the Queen of Sheba to establish relations with Israel. Sad to say, however, instead of rendering to God the fruits He hoped for, the husbandmen "took His servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another."

In all the earlier pictures of the failure of Israel, the fruitlessness of the vineyard had been stressed. Israel was accused of bearing "wild grapes" or bitter fruit; it was an "empty vine," a "strange vine." In Jesus' story attention is centred on the wicked husbandmen, the leaders of the nation who failed to deliver the fruits of their witness according to the covenant made with God. And the abuse of the messengers fully accords with the treatment they meted out to the prophets and messengers sent to them.

The ministry of Samuel and his fellow prophets in the days of the judges ended in every man doing "that which was right in his own eyes." In the days of Elijah, Jezebel slew the prophets of the Lord and would have killed Elijah if she could. And finally, in the days of the later prophets, Isaiah is said to have been sawn asunder, Jeremiah was imprisoned in a filthy dungeon, others were maltreated and killed in various ways, while Zachariah's blood was spilled in the sanctuary itself. Thus God sent to Israel messenger after messenger "rising up betimes, and sending" until "there was no remedy," and the nation was abandoned to their enemies.

After the return from captivity Israel still failed to render the fruits of their witness to the Lord and so, as a last resort, God, the Householder, decided to send "unto them His Son, saying, They will reverence My Son. But when the husbandmen saw the Son, they said among themselves, This is the Heir; come, let us kill Him, and let us seize His inheritance."

This brought the story right down to the events then being enacted, for as Jesus related the parable He was surrounded by the wicked husbandmen of the Sanhedrin who were bent on destroying Him. In just a day or two their fearful plans would come to fruition and the last act in the terrible drama would be fulfilled. "And they caught Him, and cast Him out of the vineyard, and slew Him." Already they had expelled Jesus from their synagogues. Soon they would cast Him "without the gate" to slay Him.

Yet so blind were the listening rulers to the direction in which the parable was moving, that when Jesus asked them, "When the Lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto these husbandmen?" they promptly replied, "He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons."

In their ignorance they had pronounced sentence upon themselves with their own lips. "Therefore," Jesus said plainly to them, "The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." In these solemn words Jesus declared that God's patience with national Israel was exhausted, their special privileges were soon to be taken away, and the task of giving the Gospel to the world was to be committed to another nation, spiritual Israel, or the church.

In Jesus' own day the transfer had begun in the ordaining of the twelve and the seventy. After His resurrection Jesus gave His disciples their great commission to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and at the first Christian Council in Jerusalem, James reinterpreted the prophecy of the rebuilding of Zion in the light of the Gospel commission.

"Simeon," he said, "hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up, that the residue of men might seek the Lord."

Forty years later the temple, forsaken by God, was destroyed, the city of Jerusalem was razed to the ground, and the dispossessed nation was scattered to the ends of the earth. Their national life and their vocation as the nucleus of God's kingdom on earth had come to an end.

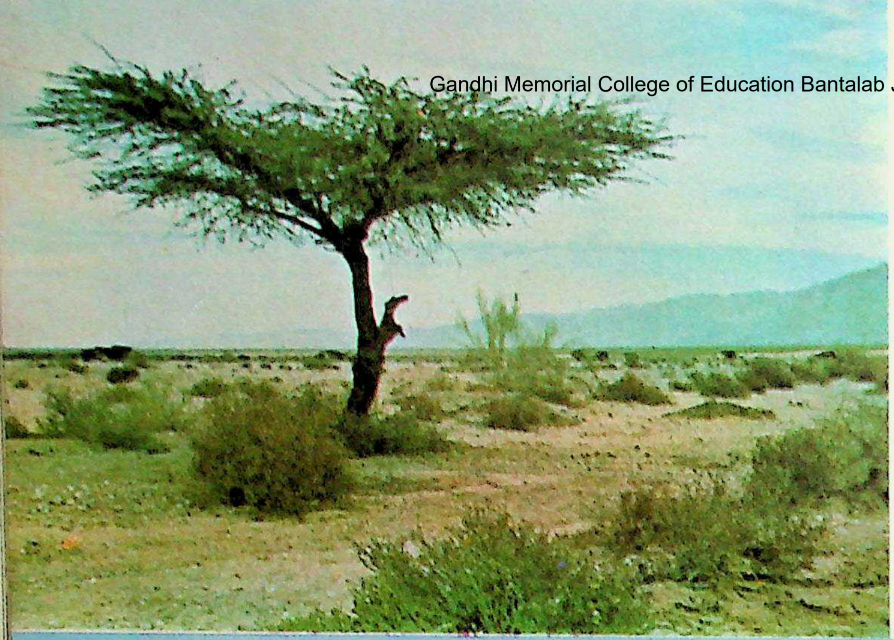
In spite, however, of the finality of Jesus' words, there are many Christians and Jews who still harbour the idea that God has only temporarily cast off His ancient people, and that in due time He plans to recover them from the lands of their wanderings and complete His world purpose through them.

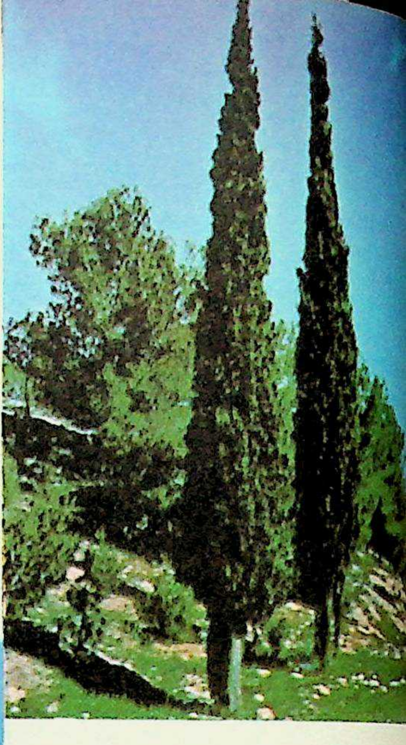
The rise of the new state of Israel is regarded by modern Zionists, both Jews and Christians, as the precursor of their restoration to divine favour. But the hope is illusory. From the point of view of practical politics, the Israeli state is only a fraction of Israel, the vast majority of Jews of the dispersion having no desire whatsoever to return to Palestine. Nor does the state of Israel regard itself in any sense as the restored nation.

There is also no support for the notion in Scripture prophecy. Jeremiah declared categorically under the symbol of the broken earthenware jar that Israel could never "be made whole again," and Jesus declared equally plainly that the instrument of His grace would henceforth be "another nation," spiritual Israel or the church.

When the chief priests heard Jesus declare that they were the wicked husbandmen they vehemently cried, "God forbid." They refused to believe that they had acted in any way like the husbandmen in the parable, or that they deserved such a fate. Jesus therefore recalled to them another prophecy of His rejection and exaltation. And significantly enough, it was from the same psalm which foretold the "Hosannas" with which He had been greeted.

"Did ye never read in the Scriptures," He asked, "The stone which the builders





Trees

TOP LEFT

The strong, close-grained wood of the desert acacia or shittim tree was used for making the furniture of the tabernacle.

ABOVE

The cypress is a magnificent evergreen tree, often growing to a height of forty feet or more in Palestine. It was frequently planted near sacred tombs.

ABOVE

The olive tree is the first mentioned in the Bible. Its beautiful wood was used in building Solomon's temple and olive oil was used for anointing.

RIGHT

Palestine has always been noted for its vineyards. The fruitful vine was used as a symbol of Israel in the Old Testament and of Christ and His church in the New.

the Bible

TOP RIGHT

The palm tree grows high and straight in spite of heat, wind, or drought. Hence the Psalmist speaks of the righteous flourishing "as the palm tree." Its crown of branches symbolizes victory.

ABOVE

These children are carrying specially prepared palm branches to commemorate Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

ABOVE

The fig tree was one of the most important food plants of Palestine, and security was indicated by the possession of "vine and . . . fig tree." Jesus used this tree to symbolize God's care for His people.

LEFT

Oranges are not mentioned in the Bible, but since the modern settlement of Palestine by the Jews, they have been extensively cultivated.

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rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes"?

Jewish tradition declares that this incident, used by inspiration to set forth the rejection and subsequent exaltation of Messiah, actually happened during the building of the temple. A certain great stone was brought from the distant quarries, cut like all the rest to shape so that it could be placed in position "without the sound of hammer, nor axe, nor any tool of iron." But because of some mistake in marking it, no place could be found for it, and it was set aside. In due time, as the builders proceeded, it was discovered that an important corner stone in the foundation, which tied together two great walls on the edge of the steep slope of the Kidron, was missing. A thorough search led the builders to the great unused stone which had endured wind, weather, and long ill-usage. When they measured it they found that it met the specifications of the corner exactly. Rejoicing, they placed the "tried stone" in position, where it gave strength to the whole edifice.

The Jewish rabbis knew that this was a Messianic prophecy and that the stone was a symbol of the Messiah, but they had never considered themselves as responsible for the rejection of the Stone. They had always thought of Messiah and His suffering nation as having been refused their proper place by the Gentile nations and that when the divine Stone was set up they would share in His triumph. But now Jesus was saying that they were the ones who had denied Him His proper place by their self-righteousness and pride, and that it would be other builders who would set up the Stone in its rightful place as the foundation of spiritual Zion.

In later days the Christian apostles made considerable use of this illustration in their preaching of Christ. Paul explained that while "Christ crucified" was to the Jews a "stumbling block," the church was built upon the "foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone," upon which Christian believers were "builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." Peter also referred to this prophecy, declaring Christ to be the "chief corner stone, elect, precious," in the foundation of the church, but "a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" to the disobedient who rejected Him.

Like the ancient Pharisees, modern Zionists have clung to the idea of the restoration of Israel with the exaltation of the Stone, and one of the earliest Jewish colonies in Palestine was named "Rosh Pinna" or "The head of the corner." But Zionism, Christian or Jewish, is an illusion, for God is now building the edifice of spiritual Zion not in Palestine, but "in England's green and pleasant land" and in every other land upon earth. In the new spiritual Israel, and not in the old, will all God's promises be fulfilled.

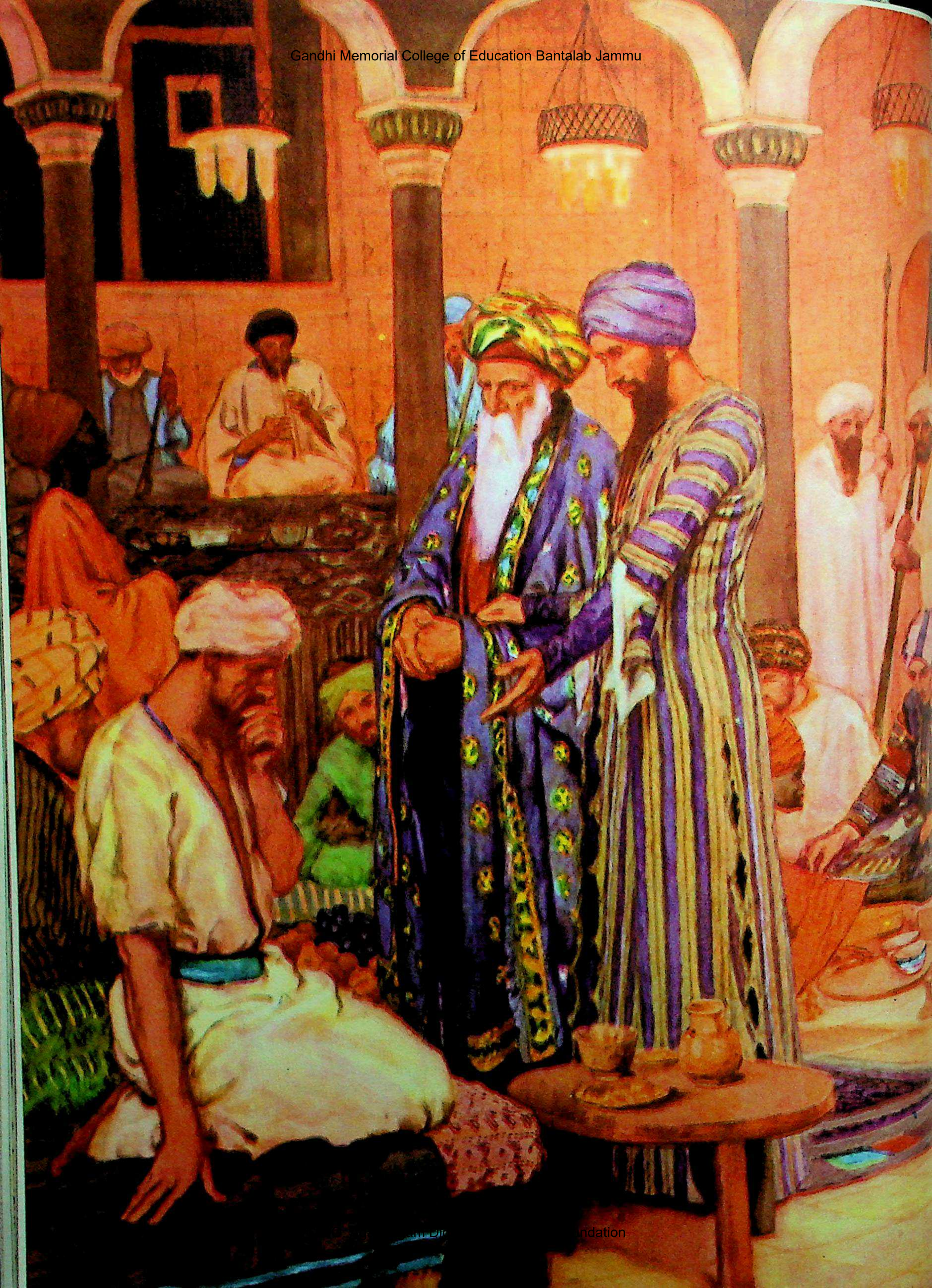
Ending His parable of the divine "Stone" Jesus declared, "And whatsoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken; but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder." (Or literally, winnow as chaff.) In these two pictures of those who will fall "on the Stone" and be "broken," and those on whom it will fall and "grind to powder," we have portrayed on the one hand those who, with broken and contrite hearts, come to God and are saved, and on the other, the utter destruction of incorrigible sinners.

When at last the chief priests and rulers realized that He spoke of them they would, in their anger, have laid violent hands upon Him; but they dared not do so because "they feared the multitude." Though the people did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, they believed that He surely was a "prophet" as John had been, and so His enemies had to leave Him unmolested to His teaching.

Besides the application of this prophecy to the doom of national Israel and their wicked rulers, it has, of course, a still wider application through all time to all nations which reject God. This is strikingly set forth in the great panoramic prophecy of the second chapter of Daniel. There we see one nation after another occupying the stage of history until the impotence of man to order the earth in peace and righteousness is fully demonstrated. Then, in time's closing hour, the prophecy culminates, "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." This kingdom is symbolized by a "Stone" cut out without hands, signifying its divine origin, which falls upon the great image, reducing it to powder, which is carried away like chaff from a threshing floor to make way for the divine "Stone kingdom."

Finally, the two parables have a personal application for us each one. We individually have a vineyard to tend that we may have fruits of righteousness to present to the divine Husbandman. There is likewise offered to us each one the opportunity of being built into the "habitation of God." The personal lesson of these parables is that we can remain "God's husbandry" only as we by grace bear the fruits of righteousness in our lives; and we can have a place in "God's building" only as, by the operation of grace, we are fashioned into "lively stones" fit to be built into the edifice of God's eternal church.

This chapter is based on Matthew 21:33-46; Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19.



CHAPTER TWELVE

The Wedding Garment

WHEN the angry Pharisees and rulers had departed, Jesus turned to His disciples and the multitude still gathered around. To them He related yet another parable to climax His condemnation of the wicked rulers and to foretell their fate.

"The kingdom of heaven," Jesus said, "is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, and sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding."

Once before Jesus had likened the kingdom of God to a feast, but on that occasion the host was simply a rich householder and the feast just a social occasion. In His second story Jesus was more specific. The Giver of the feast was now none other than the divine King and the occasion the marriage of His Son. The feast is thus identified with "the marriage supper of the Lamb" shown later in vision to John the Revelator.

The original invitation to this inaugural feast of the kingdom was given to Israel by the long succession of the earlier prophets. Then John the Baptist was sent forth to declare that the kingdom of heaven was "at hand."

In both parables the guests first invited, the Jews, were heedless of the gracious invitation, and for one reason or another "would not come."

So in his longsuffering and patience the king "sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage."

This could well apply to the labours of the disciples who, at the behest of Jesus, followed up the work of John. But still the unbelieving Jews "made light of it and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise" and their other worldly pursuits.

The ungrateful guest was dismissed from his place at the king's table.
By W. G. SIMMONDS

In Jesus' earlier parable the messengers were not harmed by those who scorned the invitation, but now Jesus revealed that some "took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them." This sad fate, we know, overtook John and also the earliest of the apostle-martyrs like Stephen and James.

Naturally "when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city." Here was yet another grim intimation of the fate which Jerusalem and the nation of Israel would soon suffer at the hands of their Roman overlords.

Continuing in the same vein as in His earlier parable, Jesus explained how the king, determined to go ahead with his plans for the wedding, sent out his servants again and farther afield in order to fill the places at his table.

"Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage." This, of course, corresponds with the great commission given by Jesus to His disciples at His ascension, in obedience to which they "went everywhere" proclaiming the Gospel invitation to the Gentiles.

Thus far the two parables had covered almost exactly the same ground, the latter only declaring more plainly the inevitable fate of those who reject God's gracious invitation.

Now, however, speaking as He was, not to the wicked rulers but to those who had responded to His call and followed Him, He added a further incident to emphasize the vital fact that an initial response to the Gospel call is not enough. It must be followed by preparation of heart and life to sit with Christ at His festal board.

Jesus had hinted at a difference between the guests when He remarked that the servants "went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."

In Israel in Jesus' day there were the "good" like Simeon and Anna who waited for the "consolation of Israel," and there were the "bad" like the hypocritical Pharisees and proud Sadducees whose hearts were far from God. In like manner the Gospel net has always gathered in the "good" and the "bad," between which man may not be able to discriminate, but who are fully known to God. So in His parable, Jesus told how, when all the guests were assembled, the king came in to see them. As he looked around, "he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: and he said unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless."

To understand the king's ground for complaint, it should be remembered that at ancient weddings an appropriate festive garment was invariably presented to each guest as he entered. This was a kindly thought on the part of the host because it meant that even the humblest could respond to the invitation without embarrassment. All differences of wealth and position were thus eliminated around the festive board.

This ancient custom Jesus used most appropriately to portray the exchange of the garments of sin for the robe of Christ's righteousness which follows response to the Gospel invitation. Some who hear the call may have no garments of character of which they can boast, while others, like the rich young ruler, may feel themselves quite presentable enough to enter the kingdom. But in the sight of God the garments of self-righteousness are no more appropriate at Christ's table than the rags and tatters of the most unsavoury character. All His guests must put on the robe of righteousness provided by His grace.

The man whom the king reproved in the parable evidently thought his own apparel as good or better than that which was offered to him, and so he considered it unnecessary to go to the trouble of changing. This was not only an insult to his host, but it revealed a fatal flaw in his character which the king could not tolerate. He was clearly more interested in the impression he would create than in doing honour to the son whose marriage was being celebrated.

In describing this man's insulting behaviour Jesus was, in the first place, describing the Pharisees who were confident that the garments of their self-righteousness would be eminently fitting at God's festal board. But besides exposing their complacency, the parable was also intended to be a continuing warning to all who aspire to sit at the table of the Lord in His kingdom.

To all who respond to the Gospel invitation Jesus offers the white robe of His righteousness. To reject that gracious offer would be tantamount to claiming that we need no transformation of character, that our own good works should be acceptable to God. It would be "going about" like the Pharisees, "to establish our own righteousness" and not submitting ourselves "unto the righteousness of God." If we would accept His loving invitation, we must accept it on His terms. Otherwise our fate will be like that of the man in the parable. "Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

The self-righteous guest in the parable was thrust out into the darkness of the street just when he thought his place was assured, and, sad to say, there will be many self-deceived ones when Jesus comes who will discover too late that they have no place at God's table.

"Many are called," Jesus said as He ended His parable, but only those who meet the divine conditions will be "chosen" to sit with Him in His kingdom. How important then that, while there is time, we examine ourselves to see if we are still clinging to the garments of our self-righteousness. And should we discover that we have been deceiving ourselves, let us hasten to discard our unacceptable garments and "put on" the white raiment of His righteousness which alone will make our "calling and election sure" to an honoured place at the "marriage supper of the Lamb."

The chapter is based on Matthew 22:1-14.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Tribute to Cæsar

ENRAGED by their public humiliation, the Pharisees retired for the second time to one of the council chambers within the temple precincts to consider what was to be done to rid themselves of Jesus.

As they could not find an excuse for ordering Him out of the temple on ecclesiastical grounds, someone suggested that they should try to entrap Him into a political offence which would involve Him with the Roman authorities. The idea seemed good and so it was decided to invite a number of Herodians to join with them in questioning Jesus on His attitude to the payment of tribute, that is, the poll or capitation tax which the Romans exacted from subject peoples to meet the costs of local government and maintain the occupation forces. It will be remembered that it was the imperial edict of Augustus Cæsar for the registration of every Jewish family for the assessment of this tax that brought Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Ardent nationalists, like the Pharisees, deeply resented the humiliation, and the Zealots, the extreme wing of the Pharisee party, had raised several revolts against the tax, using as justification the scriptural injunction, "Thou mayest not set a stranger over thee." Such revolts, of course, stood no chance of success against the might of Rome and were savagely suppressed. Judas of Galilee is mentioned in the book of Acts as one Jewish leader who was put to death for subversive activities when his followers were scattered.

In contrast with the Pharisees, the Herodians took the line that as the nation was powerless to drive out the Romans, they might as well make the best terms possible with their conquerors. They were the "collaborators" of those days, who by currying favour with the Romans, derived considerable advantage for themselves.

The Pharisees try to involve Jesus in a political offence over the tribute money.
By ANTON DORPH

Some even enriched themselves at the expense of their fellow-countrymen by assisting in the collection of taxes for Herod and Cæsar.

Being poles apart both politically and theologically, the Pharisees and Herodians had little association with one another, and only on one occasion previously is there any record of a combined attack on Jesus. Now, however, in desperation, the Pharisees were ready to make any alliance to compass His destruction.

Even so, the leaders of the Pharisees could not bring themselves personally to approach their Herodian opponents, so they sent some of the younger Pharisees who were in training in Jerusalem to put the proposition to them. The Herodians hated Jesus as much as the Pharisees, though for different reasons, and so it was not long before a joint deputation was arranged to interview Jesus.

Pretending that they had been discussing the question of tribute among themselves and had come to Jesus, as a highly respected and fearless Teacher, for counsel, they set their trap to catch Him.

"Master," they said, with feigned reverence, "we know that Thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest Thou for any man: for Thou regardest not the person of men, Tell us therefore, what thinkest Thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not?"

Jesus immediately saw through their cunning scheme. If He were to side with the Herodians and say that it was lawful to pay the tax, the Pharisees would be able to blacken His character in the eyes of the people as a traitor to the nation. On the other hand, if He agreed with the Pharisees that the tax was unjust, the Herodians would be able to "deliver Him unto the power and authority of the governor," Pontius Pilate, as an instigator of rebellion.

Looking straight into the eyes of His questioners Jesus replied, "Why tempt ye Me, ye hypocrites? Show Me the tribute money."

The Pharisees would certainly not have contaminated themselves by carrying pagan Roman coins in their satchels when they went into the temple, so it was probably one of the Herodians who produced "a penny" or silver "denarius," which had a value of about eightpence halfpenny.

Jesus "saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? They said unto Him, Cæsar's." Actually Julius Cæsar was the first to put his head on Roman coinage. Augustus Cæsar followed suit, and in Christ's day the head was that of Tiberius Cæsar.

Handing the coin back to the one who had presented it to Him, Jesus said quietly, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's; and unto God the things that are God's."

The deputation was completely taken aback by this reply. They were sure that Jesus could not avoid committing Himself one way or the other, but it was impossible to "take hold" of what He had said and use it against Him, for He had left the onus on them to decide what were Cæsar's rights of possession.

The Jews indeed had a rule with reference to their contacts with other nations to the effect that, "Wherever any king's coinage obtained, there his authority should be acknowledged." The fact that they were using Roman coinage thus required them, by their own rule, to acknowledge Cæsar's authority and his rightful demands.

Whether the subjection of the nation to the Romans was right or not was not the issue. The Romans ruled the country and protected it with their military forces; it was obvious therefore that they would be required to meet the costs of government. It was not a question of whether they should *give* tribute to Cæsar. They were clearly required to *render* it as a legal due and political necessity.

In actual fact they were entirely responsible for the situation in which they found themselves. If they had been true to God, His protection would have guaranteed their independence. Their subjection successively to Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and now the Romans was the inevitable consequence of their disloyalty. God had declared through Moses that if they persisted in their sins He would finally bring against them "from afar, from the end of the earth," a "nation of fierce countenance," whose "tongue" they would "not understand" and who would put "a yoke of iron" upon their necks, a most remarkable prophetic description of the Romans. This had now come to pass and they could not expect to escape from the consequences of their bondage. One of the obvious consequences was the payment of tribute, and to refuse to pay the tax, was not only rebellion against the Romans but against the righteous judgment of God.

All this was implied in Jesus' injunction, "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's." But Jesus did not stop there. He added another declaration which confronted both the Pharisees and the Herodians with a much more serious issue. Render "unto God," He said, "the things that are God's."

While they were hair-splitting as to whether they should pay the tax demanded by Cæsar, they had sadly neglected the unquestionable duty of rendering to God "the things that are God's." Indeed it was the failure of all factions of the Jewish rulers to be faithful in their duty toward God which had brought them to their present position of subservience. If they had been true to Him they would never have had to decide whether or not it was right to pay tribute to Cæsar.

Their wicked plotting was thus doubly exposed and there was nothing that they could say in their defence. Shamefacedly, therefore, they "left Him and went their way."

There was, however, very much more in Jesus' reply than an adroit escape from the trap the Pharisees and Herodians had laid for Him. In His concise pronouncement Jesus strikingly summarized the Christian's relationship to earthly rulers and to God as long as time shall last. These profound principles the apostle Paul elaborated in his discussions with the pagan Greeks in Athens and with the Gentile Christians in Rome.

God, explained Paul, not only created men upon the earth but He also determined "the bounds of their habitation." Hence "the powers that be are ordained of God." They may be righteous rulers or tyrannical powers, but at any given time the disposition of the nations is according to His permission. For this reason the Christian is to be "subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates," and comply in all things to the requirements of earthly governments, provided that their demands do not conflict with the law of God.

"Whosoever, therefore, resisteth the power," Paul says, "resisteth the ordinance of God . . . for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake."

"For this cause," he goes on, "pay ye tribute also: for they are God's ministers, attending continually upon this very thing. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour."

Peter likewise gives the same counsel to believers. "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well."

More than this, the Christian has a particular duty to pray for rulers that they may preserve peace and give freedom for the extension of the Gospel.

Though the old empires have gone and new nations have taken their places, it is still true today that the "powers that be" rule by permission, if not by the approval, of God and so, whether they are righteous or tyrannical rulers, the Christian is in honour bound to render cheerfully all the dues which may properly be demanded of him.

However, above the Christian's duty to the state by which he is governed, he has a duty to God. Into this sphere the secular power has no right to intrude, and if it does, the true follower of God has a right and duty to resist even in the face of suffering and death.

When Daniel and his companions were confronted with the demand of heathen monarchs to desist from the worship of the true God or to worship false gods, they very rightly refused, even though their lives were threatened.

When the rulers of the Jews forbade Peter and John to preach Christ they plainly told the tribunal before whom they were called that they must "obey God rather than men."

In pagan Rome and during the Dark Ages, thousands of Christians perished rather than deny God. And today in many lands where religious liberty is denied either by over-reaching secular dictators or authoritarian churches, Christians are continually facing prison and even death for conscience sake.

How grateful then should we be who dwell in lands where there is complete freedom, for liberty to render to God "the things that are God's," and how much the more ready should we be to "render unto Cæsar" the things that rightly belong to him.

This chapter is based on Matthew 22:15-22; Mark 12:13-17; Luke 20:20-26.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Life Beyond

AMONG the crowd which witnessed the discomfiture of the Pharisees over the question of tribute to Cæsar were certain of the Sadducees. Having no use for the extreme nationalism of the Pharisees or for the theological complexities of their traditions, the Sadducees had little sympathy for them in their humiliation. At the same time the Sadducees had their own reasons for wanting to get rid of Jesus—His interference with the temple trading, for example! So as the baffled Pharisees slipped away, the Sadducees launched a new attack, with the object of discrediting Jesus in the eyes of the people.

One of the issues on which they radically differed from the Pharisees was the question of a future life. The Pharisees in the days of Jesus, while professing to base their teachings on the Scriptures of the Old Testament, had been considerably influenced by the philosophic ideas of the Platonist Greeks and had come to teach the continued existence of the "soul" after death, which they combined with the Bible teaching of the resurrection, the latter being limited to the body. The materialistic Sadducees, on the other hand, had absorbed the philosophic ideas of the Epicureans and Stoics and had gone to the other extreme of denying an after-life altogether. They asserted that the "soul" died with the body and that there was no future existence in which men would receive the reward or punishment which their earthly life merited. As a corollary of this, they denied also the existence of angels or any other spiritual order of beings higher than man.

Having had many arguments with the Pharisees on this issue they thought it would provide an opportunity of confusing Jesus before the people. So one of the Sadducees posed a problem to Him.

"Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother. Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. And last of all the woman died also. Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her."

For the purpose of his argument the Sadducee invoked a statute given by Moses for the purpose of assuring family continuity in Israel. This law provided that in the event of an Israelite dying childless, his widow should be taken as wife by one of her brothers-in-law, and that the first child should take the name of the deceased husband and inherit his property. Thus the family name and the family inheritance would be preserved inalienable from generation to generation. The law was not mandatory, but failure to conform was regarded as an act of disloyalty to the family, and incurred public odium.

Probably the Sadducee's rather fantastic application of this provision was a comman catch question used in arguments with the Pharisees, and the Sadducee thought he would put it to Jesus. But if the Pharisees were confused by the question, Jesus certainly was not.

"Ye do err," He replied at once, "not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God."

On two counts the question was a foolish one. In the first place it was very conceited of the Sadducees to think that they had detected a flaw in the ordinance of which Moses was unaware, and which even God Himself had not taken into account. If they studied the Scriptures a little more closely they would realize that no such embarrassment as they suggested could possibly arise in the after-life, for the simple reason that relationships in the kingdom of God will be different in fundamental respects from those in this present life.

"But they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are children of God, being children of the resurrection."

In this life one of the most important purposes of the marriage relationship is the preservation of the human race. In the life to come, as there will be no death, no such provision will be needed. The special relationship of the sexes which is a part of marital life on earth will, therefore, no longer obtain, and thus the question as to whose wife the widow would be in this sense would not arise. The relationships of love and fellowship which are established in this earthly life will indeed be continued in the life beyond, but they will be so widened and deepened as to preclude any feelings of jealousy or any sense of deprival such as the Sadducee envisaged. In this respect the fellowship of the children of the resurrection will be akin to the fellowship of the angels in heaven.

In the second place the Sadducees' refusal to believe in the possibility of an after-life through resurrection was a denial not only of the wisdom, but also of the power, of God. If God were the Creator of all life it was surely an insult to His omnipotence to suggest that death could wrest His creatures from Him beyond the possibility of recovery. Paul put this point to King Agrippa, who had probably been influenced by Sadducean thinking, when he asked him, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?"

In support of this eminently reasonable doctrine Jesus could have cited many categorical statements of Scripture concerning the reality of the after-life. He could have quoted the inspired assurance of Isaiah: "Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise." And again, "The earth shall cast out the dead."

He could have referred to God's promise through Hosea: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death."

He could have quoted Ezekiel and Daniel: "I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves." "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt."

But as the Sadducees regarded only the writings of Moses as authoritative, Jesus chose to prove the doctrine of the after-life from them, and thus show that the Sadducees did not even know the Scriptures on which they professed to rely. "That the dead are raised," Jesus said, "even Moses showed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living."

If Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were to have no existence beyond the earthly life from which they had long passed, then the declaration could have no meaning. It was only intelligible if Abraham and Isaac and Jacob were to be rewarded in some future life for their loyalty to God in this life.

God had made many promises to the patriarchs which were not fulfilled in their earthly lives. He had, for example, promised Abraham that He would give him Canaan "for an everlasting possession," but Abraham was a pilgrim and a stranger in the earth all his life, and when he died he was not in possession of even a square foot of it. But Abraham died believing the covenant God had made with him and looking for a "city" and a "country" which one day he would inherit. Many other promises were made to Isaac and Jacob and subsequent worthies of Israel who also "died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off." If such promises are never to be fulfilled, God's Word as well as His power are impugned. Unless therefore God is a liar there must be an after-life in which Abraham and his seed will inherit not only the land of Canaan but "the world." To these irresistible arguments the Sadducees had no reply.

It must not be supposed, however, that Jesus' refutation of the Sadducees thereby ranged Him on the side of the Pharisees in their belief in the natural immortality of the soul, for elsewhere He had shown them to be equally in error. The Sadducees were right in teaching that death brings conscious existence to an end. They were wrong in their deduction that the dead had thereby passed beyond God's power of recovery. The Pharisees were right in their assertion that there was a life after death, but they were wrong in their belief that this existence continued uninterrupted by the death of the body. Jesus underlined the consistent teaching of the Bible that death brings conscious existence to an end, but that in due time the dead will all be "raised" to answer for their earthly lives before the judgment bar of God.

Contrary to the Pharisees' teaching that the dead were consigned to separate places of waiting according as their lives had been righteous or wicked, Jesus declared that all the dead await in the "grave" their call to judgment. Yet He made it very clear that there is a very definite separation between them in the purpose of God. As the apostle Paul later on put it, those who have "lived" unto God die "in Christ" and their lives are "hid with Christ in God." For this reason Jesus was able to say, "He that hath the Son hath life," even though he might pass temporarily through the portals of the tomb. In the mind of God he still lives. God is therefore still the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and of all the faithful dead "in Christ" who will be raised to everlasting life.

The lives of the wicked as well as of the righteous may likewise be said to be "hid in God," seeing that God holds every life in His power, but they are not "hid with Christ in God." All will be raised in due time by God's power that He may manifest to them and to the universe the righteousness of His judgments, but while, after the judgment, the righteous will enter into "life everlasting," the wicked will become "as though they had not been." This is what the Bible calls "the second death" from which there will be no return.

Jesus' exposure of the materialism of the Sadducees ought to be a lesson to the materialist "Sadducees" of our day who think that, by their superior wisdom, they can pick flaws and find absurdities in the Word of truth. With a show of knowledge they argue that the Bible is out of harmony with the "assured results" of the modern sciences of geology, biology, psychology, and the rest. The fact is, however, that when Bible teaching is tested against fact rather than theory it is the speculations of the modern Sadducees that invariably prove to be wrong. Those who are so wise in their own conceit that they cannot believe the "simple Gospel" sooner or later are shown to have been "willingly ignorant" of vital facts which substantiate the Bible in every detail. And not only has it been shown time and again that they have erred with reference to the facts or their interpretations of them, but, like the Sadducees of old, they constantly reveal themselves devoid of the spiritual insight necessary to understand the profundity of its inspired teachings. The apostle Paul warned the believers of his day to give no heed to the "*oppositions* of science falsely so-called," and the counsel is still needed.

This chapter is based on Matthew 22:23-33; Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-38.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

The Great Commandment

WHEN the Sadducees retired defeated, some of the scribes came around again with new questions to try to confuse Jesus. They were as glad to see the Sadducees discomfited as the Sadducees had been at their humiliation, but the prestige which Jesus was gaining from these encounters was driving them to desperation. Some way must be found, and found quickly, to bring Him into disrepute in the eyes of the people.

"One of them, which was a lawyer," therefore, "asked Him a question, tempting Him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law?"

It was one of the popular exercises of the rabbis to arrange the 248 affirmative and 365 negative commands of the rabbinical code in what they considered to be the order of their spiritual precedence. Those of absolute importance they classified as "heavy," while the lesser ones which could be carried out by those who had time to fulfil them they regarded as "light."

If Jesus had been prepared to commit Himself to any particular order it would have started a debate in which the lawyer and his fellow scribes could, at least, have displayed their erudition in the presence of the people and thus restored some of their prestige.

But Jesus was too wise to be caught up in any rabbinical argument. Instead of "weighing" commandment against commandment as the lawyer had hoped, He drew attention to a fundamental principle of Scripture which the Jews regularly recited in their morning and evening prayers, and which they even wore on their forehead and arm in their phylacteries.

"The first of all the commandments," He replied, "is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt *love* the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment."

The Jews could claim to fear God and give Him divine honours, but they did not "love" Him, and this vitiated all their worship. Because they did not realize that "the first commandment . . . is *love,*" all their worship was reduced to a joyless ritual rather than a happy fellowship; and their obedience had become a burden rather than heartfelt response to the love of God.

To complete His exposure of the hollowness of the whole rabbinical system of calculated righteousness, Jesus gratuitously added a second command to the first for which the lawyer had asked.

"The second," He said, "is like, namely this, Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour as thyself," and He added: "There is no other commandment greater than these. . . . On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

This too was a quotation from the Old Testament, with which they should have been familiar, and it revealed that "love" and not personal glory should have been the motive of all acts of benevolence to their fellow-men. Only on the basis of love could men reach this high standard of loving their fellow-men "as themselves."

There was nothing selfless about the Pharisees' attitude to others. They did everything with the greatest publicity and ostentation in order that it might reflect credit to themselves, not because they cared for the poor and desired to satisfy their needs. Their failure in this respect was, Jesus intimated, a consequence of the fact that they did not love God. If they had loved God as they should, they would have loved their fellow-men also. Because they did not truly love God, they did not truly love their fellow-men.

The Pharisees indeed were quite wrong in classifying the second half of the Decalogue as "lighter" than the first half. The second commandment was actually "like" or equal to the first because each was dependent on the other. From these two commandments jointly every other commandment sprang.

It was to offset the prevailing Jewish idea that there were degrees of obedience that James in his epistle to the church declared, concerning the commandments of the law, "whosoever shall . . . offend in one point, he is guilty of all." No commandment of God or of Christ can be neglected without undermining the basis of obedience to all the rest.

The scribe who had approached Jesus with the avowed purpose of catching Him was visibly impressed with the profundity of Jesus' reply and declared, "Master, Thou hast said the truth: for there is one God; and there is none other but He: and to love Him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love his neighbour as himself, is more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."

Despite his pharisaic upbringing he could not but admit Jesus' point that mere ceremony has no value in itself, and that acts of worship and service are only pleasing to God if they spring from love in the heart.

Sensing the profound change in the man's attitude, Jesus said earnestly to him, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

It is not recorded whether this lawyer went on to take the final step and associate himself fully with Jesus, or whether, like the rich young ruler, he drew back on the very verge of the kingdom, but we do know that since his day many who have set out to criticize the Bible and its teachings have, as a result of a similar experience, been brought to realize its truth and to prostrate themselves in humble contrition before the Saviour they found in it.

The remarkable effect of Jesus' talk with the lawyer for a while silenced others who had hoped to follow up with further theological problems, and so it was Jesus' turn to put their professed knowledge to the test.

"What think ye of Christ?" He demanded of them, "whose Son is He?"

Not suspecting where the question would lead, they answered readily, "The Son of David." They did not need any profound knowledge to give this answer, for it was so declared time and again in the writings of the prophets. "Hath not the Scriptures said," they declared on another occasion, "That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was?"

Receiving their answer without comment, Jesus next asked the rabbis, "How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord?"

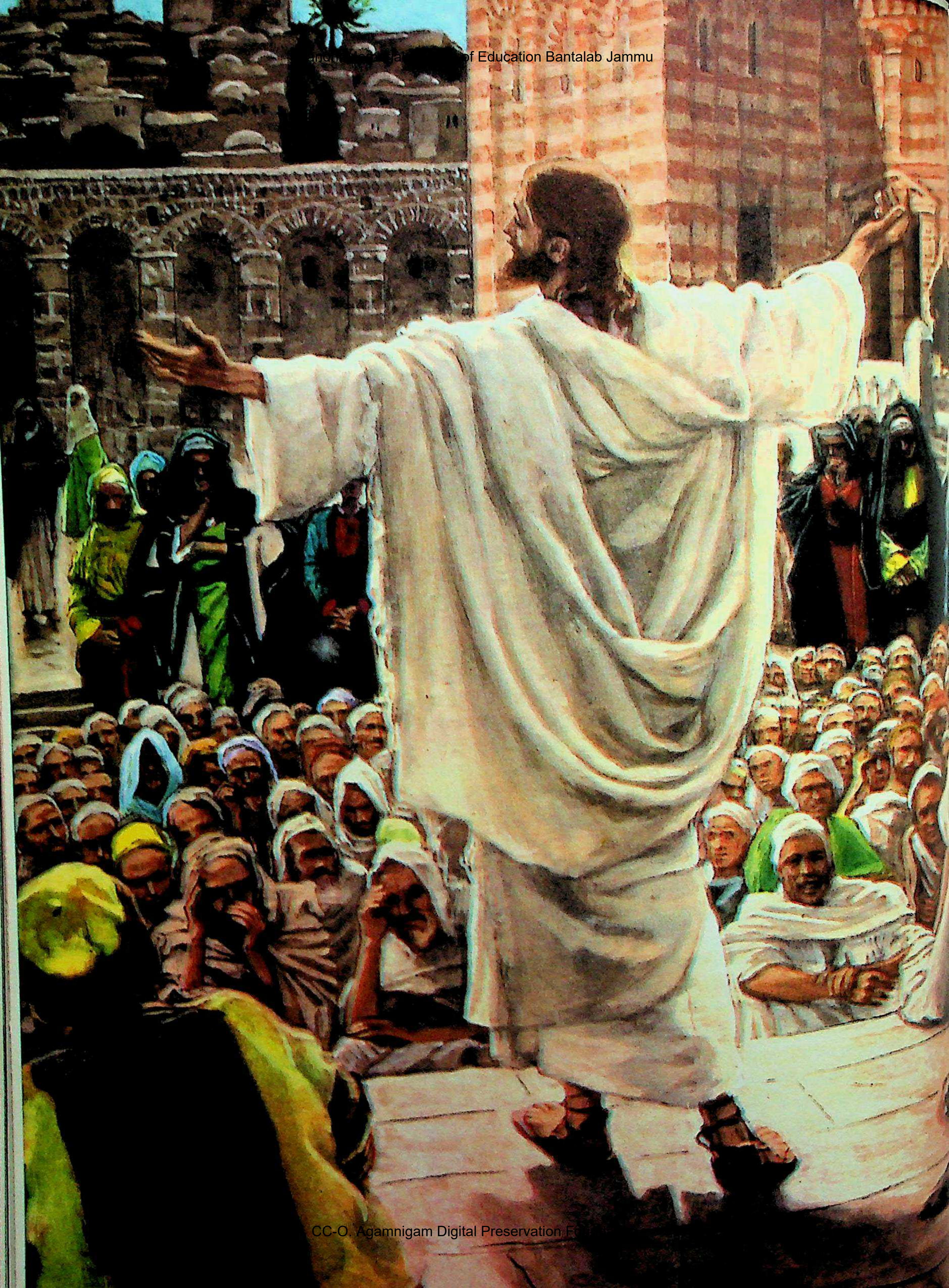
They ought to have been able to answer this second question as easily as the first, for the prophets had equally clearly declared that this Child "out of the stem of Jesse" would be no ordinary Son, but the incarnate Lord from heaven. Had not Isaiah said, "Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"? And again, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

But though the rulers knew the answer they now dared not give it, because if they admitted that Messiah would be both Son of man and Son of God they had no right to dismiss Jesus with such contemptuous remarks as, "We know this man whence He is," "Is not this the carpenter's Son? is not His mother called Mary?" They should have been prepared to investigate the evidence of His miraculous birth, the source of His wonderful works and words, the testimony of John the Baptist, and the remarkable fact that in harmony with Messianic prophecy the common people and even the children had involuntarily hailed Him as both Son of David and Son of the Highest when He entered Jerusalem just a few days earlier. Either His claim could be proved a blasphemous lie or they must admit that it was true.

Recognizing now the dilemma into which Jesus' questions were leading them, the Pharisees and scribes extricated themselves hastily from the discussion and none dared "from that day forth" to "ask Him any more questions."

The rulers of the Jews had had their last chance to accept the irrefutable evidence that Jesus was the Messiah, and they had finally refused to recognize Him. There was nothing now for Jesus to do but to publicly denounce them and pronounce upon them the inevitable consequences of their sin. This He did in the eight terrible "woes" which follow.

This chapter is based on Matthew 22:34-46; Mark 12:28-37; Luke 20:39-44.



CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Eight "Woes"

IT was late on Tuesday afternoon, Jesus' last day of ministry in the temple. Evening was drawing on and the people were already beginning to leave for their temporary lodgings in the nearby villages, or the shelters they had erected in the orchards and gardens on the hills around.

The rulers had had their last chance to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, but blind hatred had closed their minds and hardened their hearts against Him. Nothing now remained but for Jesus to declare the inevitable consequences of their perversity and unbelief.

But first He had a word for the people to prepare them for the final exposure of their spiritual leaders, and a word to His disciples who were soon to become the teachers and leaders of the Christian church.

Addressing the crowd who had been listening spellbound as He met challenge after challenge from the rulers with quiet dignity and authority, He said:

"The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat." They claim to be the guardians and expositors of the sacred law. In the synagogues they occupy the interpreter's seat beside the Ark of the Scrolls. As such they should be also examples of righteousness. But, declared Jesus, they have a standard for themselves very different from that which they seek to impose on others. "For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

In their official capacity the scribes and Pharisees demanded rigid conformity not only to the law of Moses, but also to the multiplied regulations of the rabbinical code, yet privately they had all manner of ruses for evading any inconvenience to themselves. They were burden binders, but they took care not be burden bearers. Their lives belied their profession. They were hypocrites!

In a final condemnation of the rejectors of His message, Jesus declared, "Your house is left unto you desolate."
By J. J. TISSOT

Nevertheless, Jesus urged His hearers, such grave inconsistencies in the lives of these professed teachers were not to be used, by those who noticed them, as an excuse for the neglect of personal discipline and obedience. "Whatsoever they bid you observe," in so far as it is according to the law of God, "that observe and do," He said, "but do not ye after their works; for they say, and do not."

This counsel has a very modern relevance for those who excuse their failure to go to church or to live the Christian life, by pointing to the many hypocrites in the church today. True, the church has never been composed wholly of saints, but those who "say and do not" must not be allowed to turn us away from our personal response to the call of Christ.

Turning next to His disciples, Jesus solemnly warned them of the sinful pride of the Jewish religious leaders and urged them never to seek pre-eminence in the church of God which was soon to be committed to their care.

"Beware," He counselled, of copying "the scribes" who strut around vying with one another in the magnificence and ostentation of their apparel. They "enlarge" the fringes on their robes and prayer shawls and they "make broad" the leather straps which bind their phylacteries around their foreheads and arms in a pretended regard for the law of God, but the commandments which they enjoin find no place in their hearts.

In their false pride they "love the uppermost rooms at feasts," manœvring to get as near as possible to the top of the table near to the host, and in the synagogues they choose "the chief seats" in front of the Ark of the Scrolls or around the speaker's dais, where they can sit enthroned before the congregation who have to stand or sit on the floor.

They loved to be saluted in the market places as "Rabbi, Rabbi," the equivalent of our "Doctor" or "Professor," and their highest ambition was to qualify for the title "Father," like the leaders of some of the theological schools, but they had no sense of responsibility for the spiritual welfare of the nation.

"Be not ye called Rabbi," Jesus exhorted His disciples: "for One is your Master, even Christ," and "call no man your father upon the earth; for One is your Father, which is in heaven." Never should they seek pre-eminence over one another, but rather should they recognize each other as "brethren."

Instead of looking for men to honour and serve them, they should take as their Example the great Teacher who humbled Himself even unto death for His followers. Self was to be lost in exalting Christ and in serving others in humility and love. The greatness they should seek was not that of recognition by men, but moral worth in the sight of God. "He that is greatest among you," said Jesus on a later occasion, "shall be your servant."

It is a pity that this counsel has so often been forgotten by the professed leaders of the church of God down the ages. All too often men have sinfully exalted themselves as "princes" of the church and sought to "lord" it over the people instead of emulating the spirit of Christ, the true "Head" of the church.

Finally, Jesus turned to the scribes and Pharisees themselves and in a series of scathing denunciations He declared how recreant they had been to the trust reposed in them by God, His eight "woes" constrasting strikingly with the eight benedictions which He pronounced, in His Sermon on the Mount, upon those who truly follow Him.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He began, "for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in."

When they were appointed to the office of interpreters of the law each scribe had received as his badge of office a large key, which he thereafter wore prominently upon his person as a sign of his authority to "bind and loose" in the name of God. But instead of using their "key of knowledge" to open the kingdom of God to men, the scribes and Pharisees had fast closed the door by refusing Jesus access to their synagogues, by diverting attention from Him through false interpretations of the Messianic prophecies, by attacking His teachings, and by threatening with dire excommunication any who should dare to follow Him.

Far from devoting their lives to the spiritual welfare of the nation, they had used their sacred calling as a means of gain to themselves.

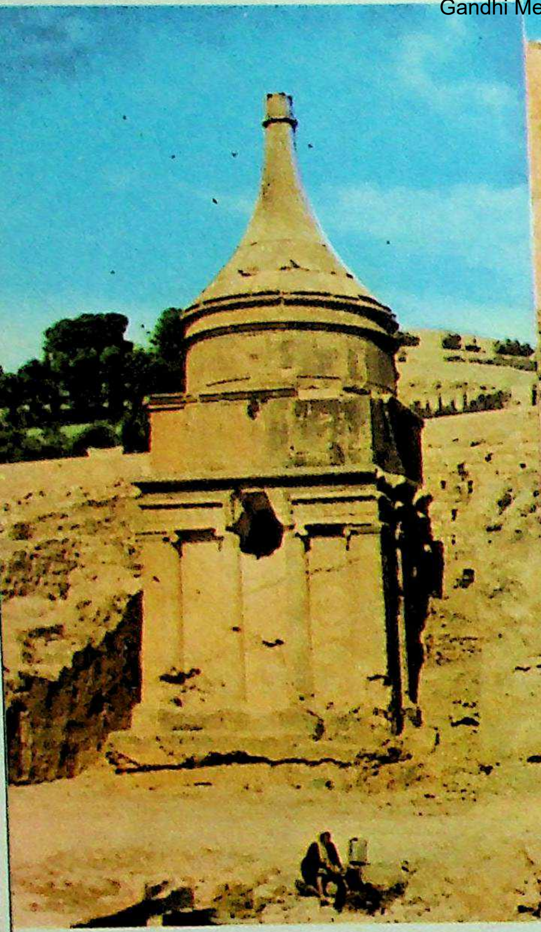
"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" Jesus went on, "for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation." Instead of giving defenceless widows the special care which the law of Moses enjoined, the wicked rulers inveigled them, in return for "long prayers," into donating their properties to the temple or synagogue for their own advantage, much as in later days the Romish priests developed the practice of selling masses and chantries to enrich the treasury of the church.

Such prayers, Jesus declared, were not only rejected by God, but would bring upon the false petitioners "the greater damnation" because they were mere acted piety for the sake of selfish gain.

True, the scribes and Pharisees professed great zeal for the conversion of the Gentiles, especially those who could be persuaded to bring large gifts or even build a synagogue, but more often than not they succeeded in making them as bad or worse than themselves in cant and formalism, in bigotry and narrow party spirit.

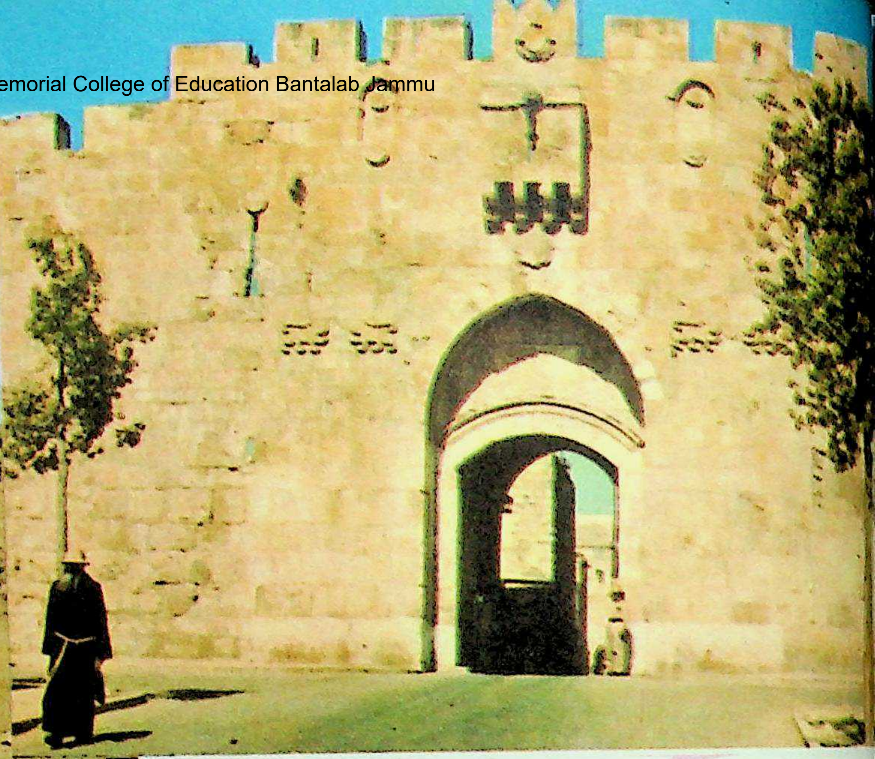
"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" cried Jesus, "for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more a child of hell than yourselves." And indeed the bitterest enemies of the apostles as they went on their missionary journeys to Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Thessalonica, Corinth, and elsewhere, were invariably the proselytes of the foreign synagogues.

Continuing His denunciation of the hypocrisy of the religion of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus pointed to the way in which they evaded the solemn oaths by which they publicly proclaimed their piety.



ABOVE

The so-called Tomb of Absalom in the Kidron Valley.

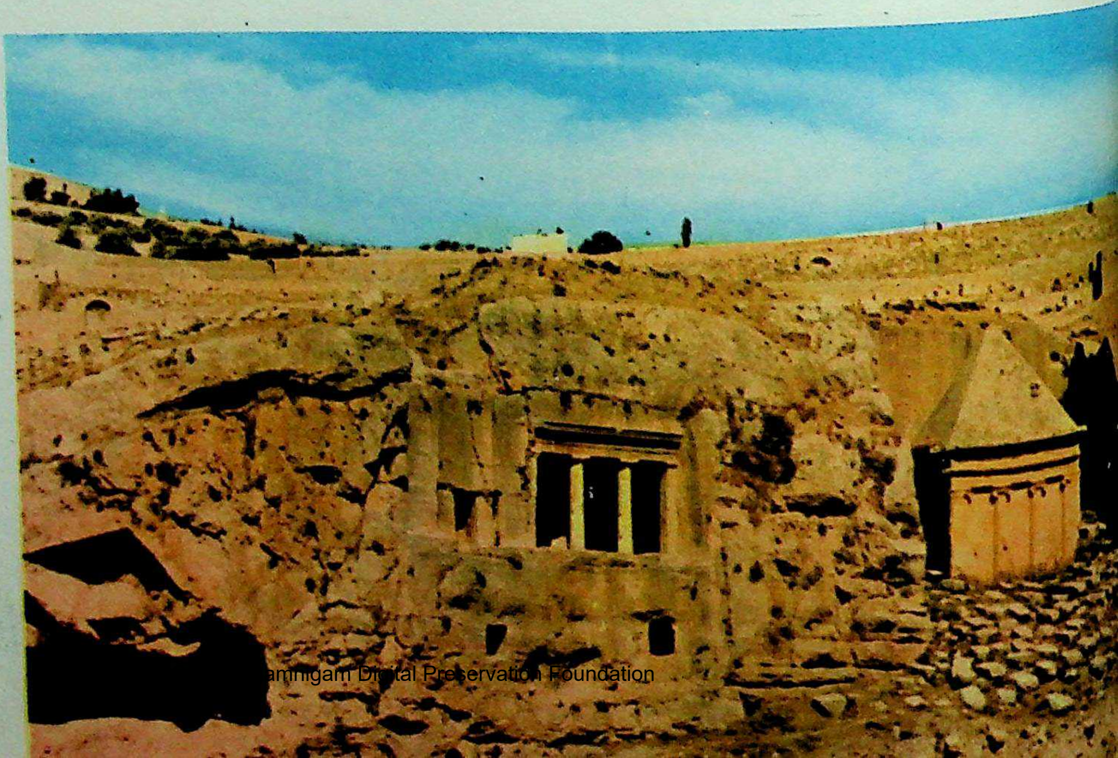


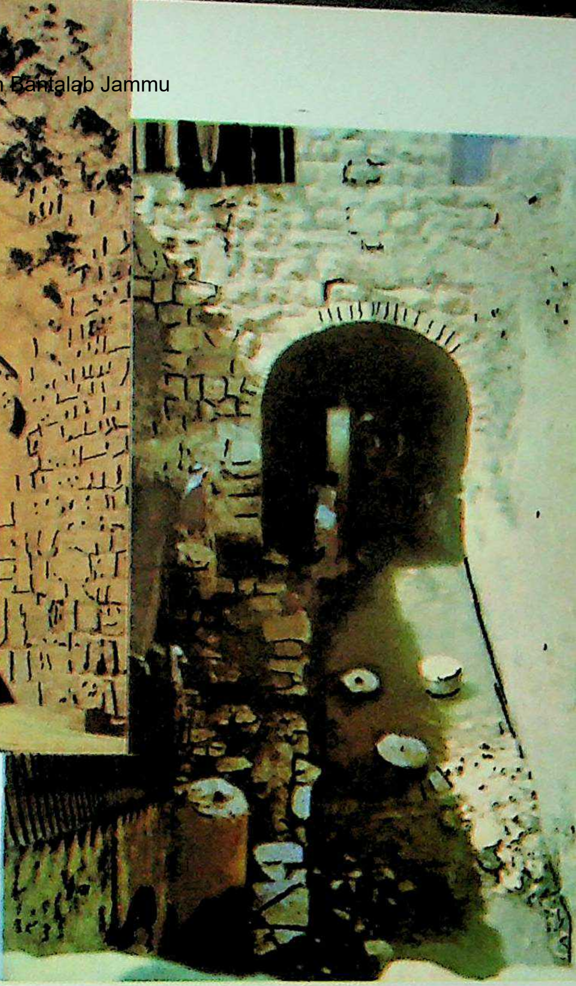
ABOVE

St. Stephen's Gate corresponds with the Sheep Gate of ancient Jerusalem.

BELOW

Two of the prominent rock monuments in the Kidron Valley. On the right is the so-called Tomb of Zachariah and on the left the Tomb of St. James.





ABOVE

Herod's Gate is one of the gates in the north wall of the Old City.

BELOW

Typical of the streets of Old Jerusalem is David Street, which leads from the Jaffa Gate to the Temple Area.

ABOVE

Of the many pools of Jerusalem, the Pool of Siloam is probably the best known.

By the use of a secret code they reversed the order of importance of sacred things so that the more binding oath was not one sworn by the temple or altar, but by minor appurtenances of the temple and altar. Thus the uninitiated were completely duped by the seeming solemness of an oath.

In time even men came to see through such Pharisaic casuistry and the oath of the Jew became suspect even among the Greeks and Romans. God certainly was never deceived. To Him such evasions were an abomination, an insult to Himself and to holy things.

Like their equivocation with words, the scrupulousness of the scribes and Pharisees in their outward ceremonialism while neglecting true moral values, further revealed their hypocrisy.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith."

Though they most scrupulously fulfilled the demands of the law of tithes, even down to the smallest of garden herbs used for sauces and seasoning, they forgot entirely the "weightier" matters of fair-dealing, kindness, and fidelity to promises. "These," said Jesus, "ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

"Ye blind guides," Jesus went on, "which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." To take the most elaborate precautions to strain their water and wine through linen lest they should drink the tiniest unclean insect was no virtue if, by some foul deed or grave moral wrong, they metaphorically swallowed a "camel."

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" He continued, "for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."

Every year on the fifteenth of Adar, just a month before Passover, they whitewashed the hundreds of tombs in the Kidron Valley outside the walls of Jerusalem, partly out of respect for the dead and partly so that no Pharisee should unsuspectingly walk over one of them and be defiled thereby. In their concern for the ceremonial cleanness of their persons they were just as particular, but like the whitened tombs, their inner lives were full of corruption and death. "Even so," declared Jesus, "ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

Lastly, Jesus referred to the veritable spate of monument building during the Herodian age which had filled the Kidron Valley with magnificent memorials erected in honour of the martyred worthies of the past.

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous." "If we had been in the days of our fathers," ye say, "we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."

Yet in reality they were worse than their fathers, for they should have learned from their sins and not repeated them. They were no more ready to heed the call to repentance from the prophets of their day, like John and Himself, than their fathers had been, and in conniving at John's death and plotting the death of Jesus they were equally as guilty.

"Wherefore," Jesus said, "ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets." Soon, He declared, they would "fill up" the "measure" of their fathers by not only rejecting Him, but also rejecting the apostles of the Gospel who would bring to them the last appeal of God. "Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers," Jesus ended, "how can ye escape the damnation of hell?"

Then walking across to one of the terraces of the temple which looked out over the flat-topped houses and narrow streets of Jerusalem, He took a sorrowful farewell of the city which was now finally rejecting Him.

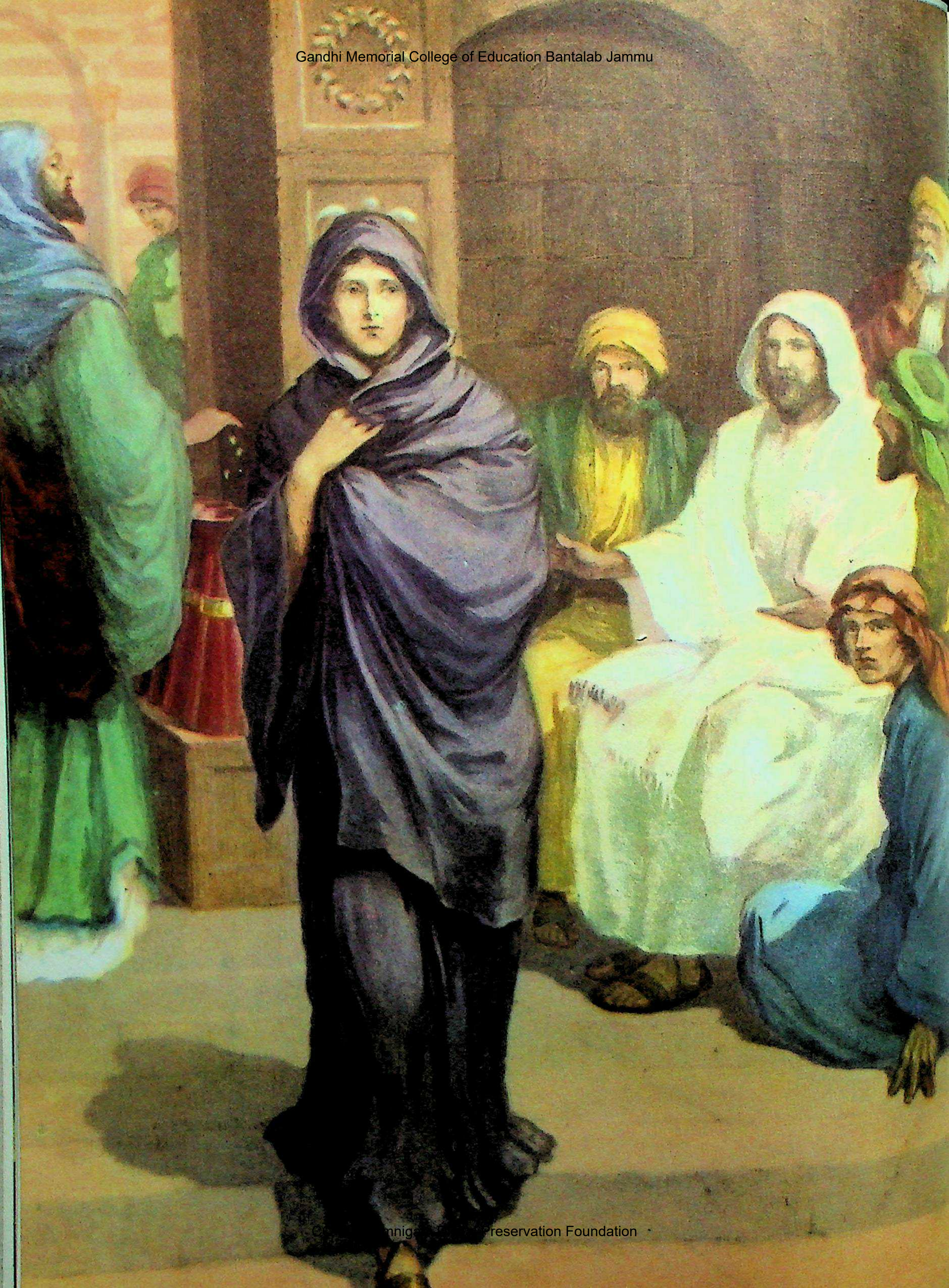
"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He cried, "thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate."

No city had been more privileged by God's presence, counsel, providence, and protection. Yet to all His pleading they had remained obdurate. They had rejected Him and now they were to be rejected by Him. Their choice had determined their destiny. God was about to depart from the city He had chosen and from the temple in which His Shekinah glory had dwelt. Never more would He refer to the temple as "My house." Henceforth it would be "your house," reserved to judgment. In witness of this, Jesus Himself was about to leave the temple, never to return. In a few days the rending of the temple veil from top to bottom would provide visual evidence that its glory was departed. In a few years the now meaningless round of services would be brought to a catastrophic end, and swift judgment would lay the city literally in the dust.

"Verily I say unto you," declared Jesus, "All these things shall come upon this generation," and forty years later His words were literally fulfilled when Jerusalem was totally destroyed by the Roman general, Titus, and more than one million of the beleaguered Jews in it perished.

Overcome with anger and terror at the dreadful doom which Jesus had pronounced upon them and upon the nation, the scribes and Pharisees stood transfixed and speechless. Without another word Jesus passed through the crowd, followed by His disciples, and walked slowly into the Court of the Women to take a last look at the inner sanctuary before leaving the temple for ever.

This chapter is based on Matthew 23:1-39; Mark 12:38-40; Luke 20:45-47.



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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

The Two Mites

IT had been a long, hard day for Jesus, culminating in His final condemnation of the religious leaders of the Jews. Leaving the scribes and Pharisees trembling with rage, He passed from the Court of the Gentiles into the Court of Women, where He sat down in the cloisters, near to the Treasury chests. There were thirteen of these offering boxes ranged on either side of the court, each with a funnel-shaped opening in the top into which coins could be dropped. The different chests were inscribed according to the purpose of the various offerings, two being for the half-shekel temple tax and the others for various voluntary offerings for the maintenance of the sanctuary services, such as the supply of animals for sacrifice, the renewal of the temple vessels, repair of the temple fabric, and sundry charitable objects.

As the court was open to the sky the chests were probably taken into one of the chambers round the colonnade each night to be emptied and the moneys counted.

Jesus had often taught in the Treasury, but now He just sat and watched as the people came by to drop their offerings in the boxes. At this time of the year, just before the Passover, there was an endless stream of worshippers, for the Lord had commanded that they should not come before Him "empty," and each had saved up as much as he was able so as to bring a good offering to the feast.

Jesus observed many wealthy Jews in rich apparel sweep by and ostentatiously fling large amounts of money into the chests, and He noted how the people turned to stare as the coins clattered down the funnels.

Then, among the crowds, He saw "a certain poor widow" unobtrusively go

More than all the rich offerings of the Pharisees, Jesus commended the poor widow's gift.

to one of the boxes and drop in "two mites [lepta], which make a farthing [or quadrans]," equivalent to one-sixty-fourth of a denarius. Then quickly she slipped away, lest some temple official standing by should reprove her for the smallness of her gift.

But though she escaped the notice of the greedy priests, her simple act of devotion had been seen by Jesus. Pointing her out to His disciples, He said, "Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living."

God estimates the value of gifts made to Him not by their intrinsic worth, but by the spirit in which they are given and the sacrifice which they mean to the giver. As Paul declared on another occasion, a man may give away all his goods to charity, but if his motive is to gain the praise of men rather than from a pure love for God and his fellow-men, his gift is as nothing. Such was the value of many of the large sums cast into the Treasury by the rich Pharisees. But the two mites which the poor widow put in, at great sacrifice, were to God of infinite worth.

As the woman slipped past she heard Jesus' comment and her heart welled up in gratitude that He so regarded her tiny gift.

This insignificant incident was in the first place given special mention in the Sacred Record as a shining example of true benevolence. It served also to reveal that while the great majority of the rulers of the Jews were proud, self-seeking, and hypocritical, there were still faithful souls among the common people. It was these that Jesus had come to save, and one may well believe that on the day of Pentecost this woman was one of the first to be gathered into the infant Christian church.

While Jesus had been sitting with some of His disciples in the Treasury, Philip had gone off on an errand, perhaps to get food for the evening meal. As he was returning he was stopped in the Court of the Gentiles by several Greek proselytes. They had seen Jesus go into the Court of Women, but they were not permitted to follow as they were only "God-fearers" and not circumcised converts. So they approached Philip, whom they recognized as one of His disciples, in the hope that he could arrange an interview for them.

There is a tradition, recorded by Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History,* that these men were Syrian emissaries from Abgarus, King of Edessa, who had heard of Christ's danger and desired to offer Him asylum in his domain. At the same time he also hoped for Jesus' help in a sickness he had contracted. It is more likely, however, that they were just a few of the many Gentile visitors who had been listening all day to Jesus on the edges of the crowd, and who wanted to assure Him that they believed in Him. "Sir, we would see Jesus," they said urgently to Philip.

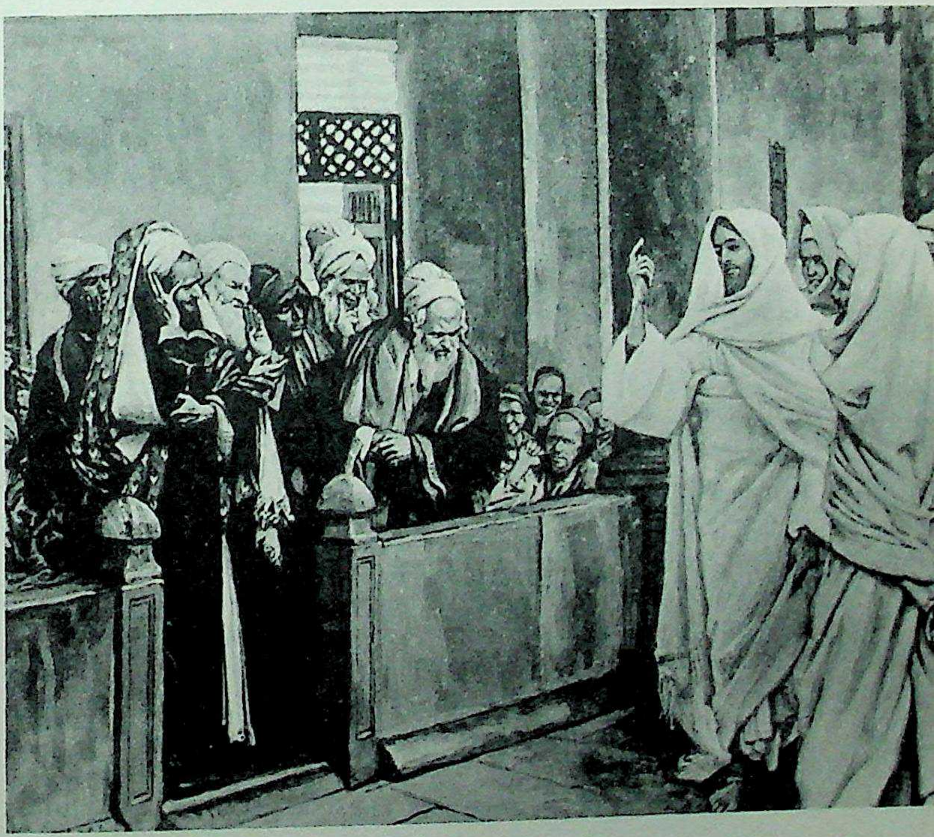
Knowing that Jesus was tired and wanted to be alone, Philip did not know quite what to do, so he sought out his special friend, clear-thinking Andrew, who suggested that they ought to tell Jesus of the Greeks' request and let Him decide if He would see them.

When He was told, Jesus at once agreed to see them, and in a quiet corner of the Court of the Gentiles they were brought to Him.

Jesus sensed the profound significance of the coming of these Gentiles at this time. At His birth the coming of the wise men from the East had foreshadowed the ingathering of the Gentiles and now again at the very end of His public ministry He was sought after by a token group of Gentiles from the West. Together they strikingly typified the going of the Gospel "into all the world" and to "every creature."

Israel's day of probation was not yet over, but this little group were the advance guard, as it were, of the "other sheep" to be gathered into the fold of the church. In the hour of apparent failure it provided Him with a glimpse of the final triumph of the Gospel, and His heart was cheered as He realized that one day He would see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied.

This chapter is based on Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4.



As the ministry of Jesus approached its climax, the opposition of the rulers of the Jews grew ever more intense.

By
J. J. TISSOT

CHAPTER
EIGHTEEN

The Hour Is Come

WHEN the Greeks had gone, Jesus turned to His disciples and told them plainly that the days of His public teaching were now ended. "The hour is come," He said solemnly, "that the Son of man should be glorified."

For a moment the hearts of the disciples must have bounded at the words, for they eagerly looked forward to the day when He would assume His rightful glory as Messiah and King. But His next words showed that He did not mean that kind of glory, yet. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." The glory to which He referred was not the glory of a throne, but the glory of the cross.

To the world the cross on which Jesus was soon to die would seem no different from the multitudes of crosses the Romans had set up, and would yet set up around Jerusalem, to put fear into the hearts of rebels against their authority. But to those who truly understood, His death would be as the falling of a grain of wheat into a furrow of the earth, from which would spring up a bountiful harvest of His redeemed people.

Jesus could have saved His life, but then it would have borne no fruit. But because He was willing to yield it up to pay the price of the world's sin, it would be diffused in new life for millions of the redeemed.

So also would it be in a certain sense with His disciples. As they followed Him their way would lead through "much tribulation" and perhaps to a cross like His. If any drew back, thinking thereby to save his life, he might preserve his physical existence for a brief space, but in the end he would "lose" it for ever. But if he was ready to follow Jesus all the way, yielding his life unreservedly in Christ's service, and if need be in martyrdom, he would "keep it unto life eternal."

The request of the Greeks to see Jesus foreshadowed the future ingathering of the Gentiles into the church.

By J. J. TISSOT

What might seem like giving up everything to follow Him would in reality be the surest way of gaining all that was supremely worth while.

As suffering would be a prelude to glory for Jesus, so also would it be for His disciples. For, He said, "where I am, there shall also My servant be: if any man serve Me, him will My Father honour."

Then reverting again to the ordeal He was about to face, Jesus went on, "Now is My soul troubled." None but He knew the physical and mental anguish which He would experience in taking upon Himself the burden of the world's guilt, and in His humanity He could not but recoil from it.

But, He continued, "What shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour." Jesus was not debating with Himself as to whether He should ask His Father to release Him from the ultimate sacrifice. There was no suggestion in His words that He contemplated abandoning humanity to its fate. "For this cause," He said, "came I unto this hour." From the foundation of the world He had dedicated Himself to the divinely-conceived plan of redemption, and in the decisive hour He would not shrink from it. He was ready, indeed eager, to go forward to the climax.

"Father," He cried, lifting His eyes to heaven, "glorify Thy name." In this climactic hour He was thinking not of His sacrifice, but of the glory He would bring to the name and character of God.

As He spoke there came the voice of God from heaven in answer to His dedication, saying, "I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again." As the "express image" of His Father, Jesus had glorified God in His words and in His work during His earthly life; now He would glorify God supremely in the final sacrifice of the cross.

There was still a little group of people following Jesus, and when they heard the Voice, some thought it was thunder, while others said, "An angel spake to Him." But God had not delegated to any created being these words of encouragement for His Son. At the baptism of Jesus and at His transfiguration God had personally declared Himself "well pleased" with His Son. And now for the third time, the testimony of Jesus in the shadow of the cross called forth the Father's approval.

Hearing the comments of the people, Jesus said to them, "This voice came not because of Me, but for your sakes." For "now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out." Even if they did not sense the full significance of that moment, it was important that it should be marked for all future generations. For it was indeed the decisive crisis of history. It was the decisive crisis for Satan, for the cross would signalize his utter defeat. And it was the decisive crisis for the world, for the attitude of men to the cross would seal their eternal destiny.

In his rebellion Satan had impugned the character of God. He had denounced God as an arbitrary Ruler, demanding implicit obedience to His will under threat of dire punishment. By this lie he had seduced many of the angels and he had beguiled our first parents into disloyalty.

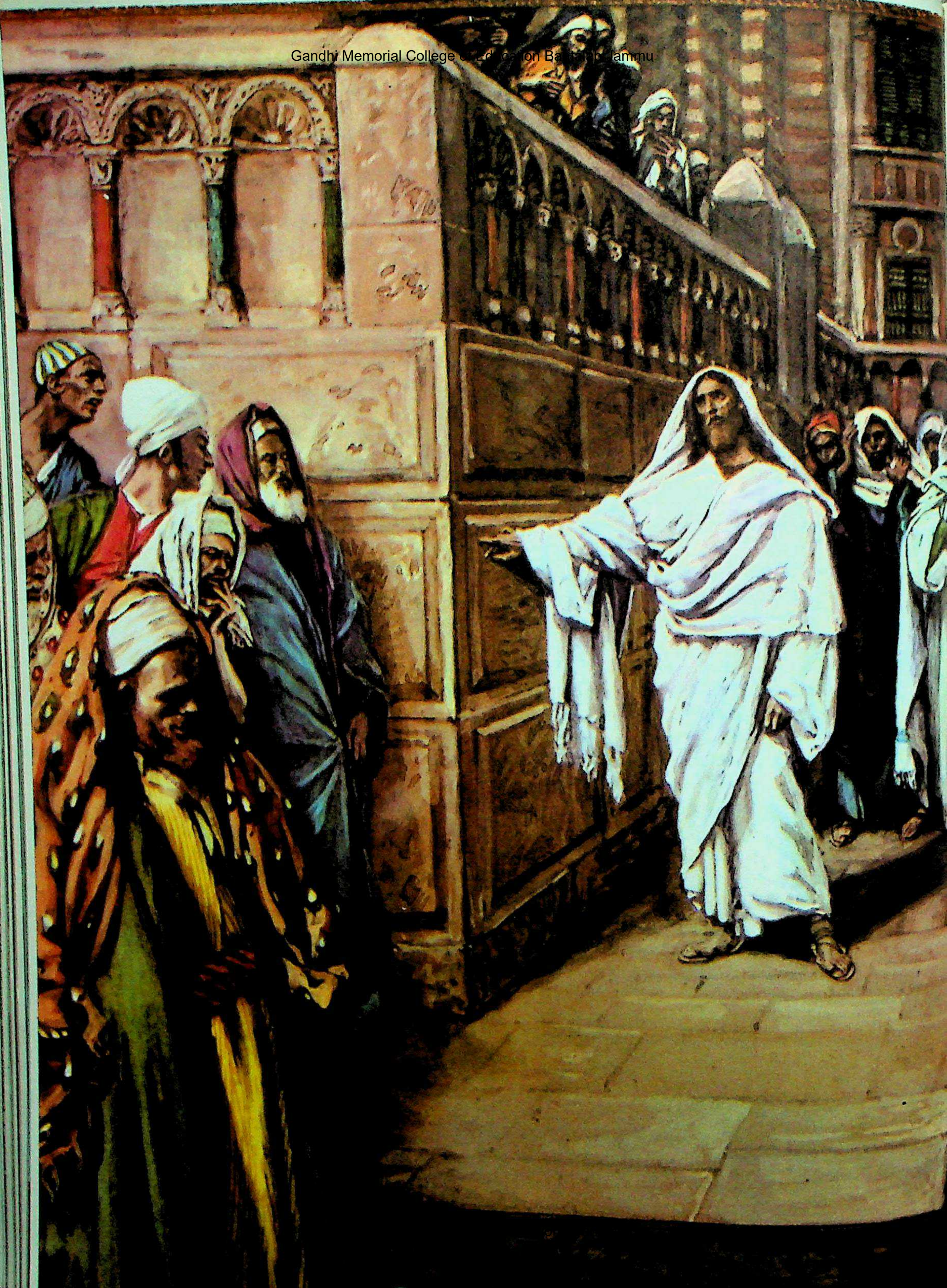
Until now Satan had seemed to be victorious. He had established his rule over the fallen angels as "prince of the power of the air," and he had set himself up on earth as the "prince of this world." He had filled the earth with sin and strife. He had turned God's chosen people against their Messiah, and he was now hounding Jesus to His death. But in reality, the moment of His apparent triumph would be the moment of His decisive defeat. The incarnation was the beginning of God's answer to Satan; the cross would be His final word. The war in heaven had cast Satan out of the heavenly courts. By the cross his earthly domain would be wrested from him. For, declared Jesus, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me." The cross would make possible the release of all humanity from Satan's bondage, and its mighty magnetism of love would draw all who were willing to be drawn to Christ and salvation. Through the cross Satan's power would be for ever broken and the divine intention in man for ever assured.

To those who had hoped that Messiah would come as a conquering King, Jesus' remark about being "lifted up from the earth" was puzzling in the extreme. "We have heard out of the law," someone said to Him, "that Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest Thou, the Son of man must be lifted up?" The question showed how completely Satan had deceived not only the angels but also the minds of men concerning the character of God. They could only think of a Messiah who would, by sheer force, put down all resistance to His rule. The cross was necessary, therefore, not only to vindicate God's righteousness, but also to manifest the wonder of His love. It was to show how far He was prepared to go to recover His lost creatures. Then it would be for men to choose whether they would follow the illuminated way to the cross or stumble blindly through the darkness to their doom.

"Yet a little while is the light with you," said Jesus. "Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: . . . While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light."

For the last time He declared that His message was from God. His words were God's words. His gracious invitation was God's invitation. To accept it was to emerge from darkness into light, from death unto life. "I am come a light unto the world, that whosoever believeth in Me should not abide in darkness." To reject His message, was to face inevitable judgment.

This chapter is based on John 12:20-50.



CHAPTER NINETEEN

When Shall These Things Be?

IT was late on Tuesday afternoon when Jesus, still followed by the remnant of the temple crowd, descended from the Golden Gate into the Valley of the Kidron. The disciples had been profoundly affected by the dire judgment which Jesus had pronounced upon the city and temple. Yet, as they looked up at the colossal foundation stones of the Herodian walls, some of them sixty feet long and ten feet high, and beheld the great gates faced with gold, silver, and brass, they could not believe that this mighty edifice could ever be overthrown.

"Master," one of them remarked to Jesus, "see what manner of stones and what buildings are here," and what "gifts" have gone into their enrichment. "Surely," he said in effect, "You cannot suggest that all this magnificence is soon to be laid in ruins?"

Jesus turned, and, looking in the direction the disciple indicated, He said solemnly, "See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you . . . the days will come, in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

Fearful that Jesus' words might have been overheard by some of His priestly enemies, to whom they would be flagrant treason, the disciples hastily dropped the subject and hurried on, until, by the time they had crossed the Kidron, the crowd had dispersed on their various ways and they were alone.

They climbed the steep path through the olive groves and fig orchards of the Mount of Olives, and near the crest of the ridge, Jesus sat down to take a last look at the rejected city.

Across the valley, about half a mile away in a direct line and a little below where He sat, lay the complex of the temple buildings, the snow-white marble of the terraced courts, porticos, and stairways tinged pink in the setting sun, which

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"There shall not be left one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down," declared Jesus.

By J. J. TISSOT

glinted and sparkled on the gilded gates, roofs, and pinnacles. It was a scene of surpassing beauty and the pride of the nation. "He who never saw the temple of Herod," someone said, "has never seen a fine building."

But the thoughts of Jesus were not upon the splendour of the sanctuary. In His mind's eye was a vision of the tragedy which was soon to fall upon the blind and impenitent inhabitants of the once-holy city.

Peter and James, John and Andrew, sat for a while beside Jesus as the shadows lengthened. Then, breaking the silence, one of them, probably Peter, raised the question which was uppermost in their minds, but which they dared not ask Him in the hearing of His enemies.

"Tell us," he said, "when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

It was clear to them now that Jesus was leaving the city to its deserved doom. They hoped that this would save Him from the sufferings and death about which He had spoken so frequently in recent months, and that when judgment had fallen, He would be able to return and reveal Himself in all His glory as Israel's Messiah. So in their question they associated together as successive events, the "things" connected with the destruction of the city, and His "coming" to end this dark episode in the nation's history. When could they expect these "things" to begin to happen, they asked, and what would be the "sign" of the approaching climax?

Jesus did not immediately correct their thinking by telling them that the "end" of Jerusalem and the "end" of the world, when His glory would appear, were to be separated by many centuries. If He had done so just before the ordeal of the cross, He knew it would have been more than they could bear. So He withheld the time sequence of events from them, and in the great prophecy which He now uttered, He mingled the two events; providing on the one hand the guidance they needed for the immediate future, and on the other an outline of the great interim which would be unfolded to the church down the centuries as it was needed. Finally, He delineated the "signs" which would alert the last-day church and prepare them for the final crisis.

Sketching in the course of events leading to the fall of Jerusalem, Jesus first warned His disciples against the deceptions by which Satan would seek to divert the attention of the church from the opening providences of God.

"Take heed," He said, "that no man deceive you, for many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ, and shall deceive many."

The warning was needed, for, as Jesus declared, many fanatical prophets, professing to be messengers of God, did arise, contradicting the message of doom which Jesus had pronounced, and many were deceived into a false sense of security and into actions which cost thousands their lives.

In the procuratorship of Fadus of Judea, for example, a certain Theudas led a multitude to the Jordan, declaring that the waters would part before him. They did not, and he was quickly apprehended by the Romans and beheaded.

Another, who came from Egypt, gathered his followers on the Mount of Olives proclaiming that at his word the walls of the city would fall down. His career too was quickly terminated and his followers were killed or scattered.

Warned by Jesus, however, the Christians were not deceived by these false prophets and so they were not involved in any of these abortive revolts or in the catastrophe of Jerusalem's end when it came.

"Ye shall hear," Jesus went on, "of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: . . . and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places." All these, He declared, would be only "the beginning of sorrows."

This too was fulfilled in the days before the fall of Jerusalem. While the temple of Janus was shut at the time of Christ's birth, indicative of peace throughout the Roman world, the later years of the century were filled with insurrections within the empire and wars on the frontiers. The Roman historian, Tacitus, opens his history of this period with the remark that it was "fertile in vicissitudes, stained with the blood of battles, embroiled with dissensions, and horrible even in the intervals of peace."

Not only did strife increase as the first century wore one, but natural catastrophes like famines, pestilences, and earthquakes caused havoc in different parts of the empire. The Acts of the Apostles records a famine in Judea in the days of Claudius Cæsar, while earthquakes followed by pestilence were recorded in the Ægean region, Macedonia, Asia Minor, and even in Rome itself in the middle decades of the century.

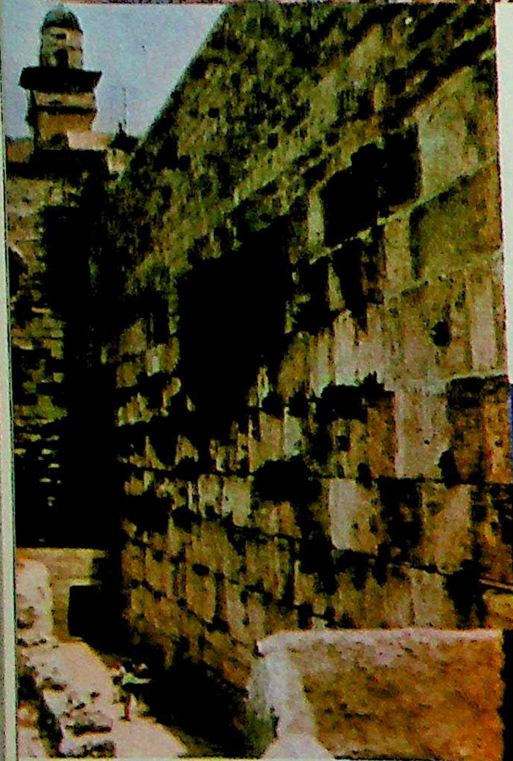
With the rising tide of catastrophe, declared Jesus, the wrath of the wicked would be turned against the faithful people of God. "They shall deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for My name's sake."

True to His prediction the infant church did become the object of attack by both Jew and Gentile. By the Jews they were persecuted as heretics. Said Jesus, "They shall deliver you up to the councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten." Peter and John and Paul were more than once apprehended by the Jews, and Stephen suffered death at their hands.

By the Romans the Christians were persecuted for undermining the worship of the national gods and the authority of the emperors. "Ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them," Jesus had said. James was the first to suffer death at the hands of the political power of Herod. Paul was later haled before Gallio, Felix, Festus, and Agrippa, and was finally beheaded by the Emperor Nero in Rome. It was this emperor who instigated the first general persecution of the Christians.

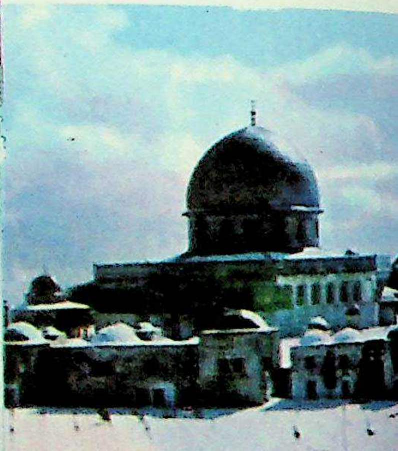
Faced with increasing persecution the believers were encouraged by Jesus' promise of divine aid. "When they shall lead you, and deliver you up," He had

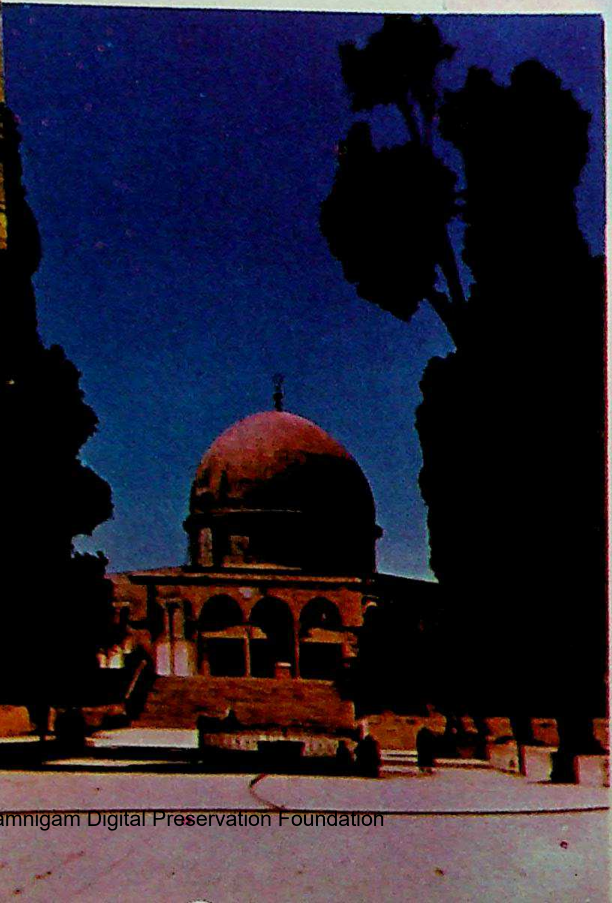
LEFT
A close-up view of some of the magnificent tile work of the Dome of the Rock, which now covers the site of the ancient sanctuary.



CENTRE
An unusual view of the Temple area under winter snow.

BELOW
Looking toward the Dome of the Rock from the south.





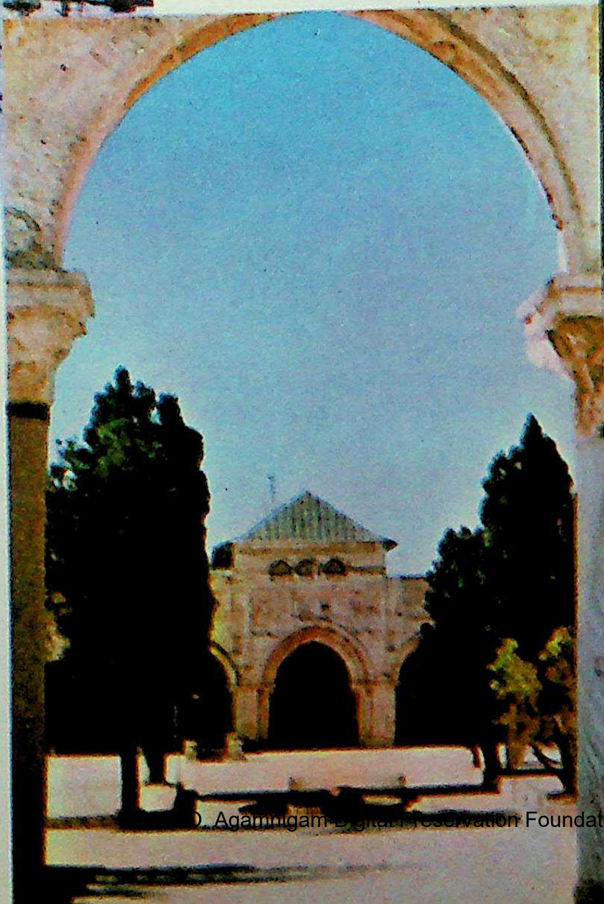
ABOVE
While not a stone of the ancient Temple remains, parts of the outer wall are still to be seen. This section is known as the "Wailing Wall."

RIGHT

Beneath the Mosque of El Aksa are the so-called "Solomon's Stables." Actually the masonry of the underground vaults belongs to the period of the Crusaders.

RIGHT

Where Jesus once taught in the Temple courts, the Moslem Imam now declaims from the Koran the precepts of Mohammed, the prophet of Allah.



LEFT

The Mosque of El Aksa now stands on the site of the palace which Solomon built for himself after the erection of the Temple of the Lord.

said, "take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak; neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist."

True to His promise the Bible records that the judges of Stephen "were not able to resist" his words; while not a few of the Roman captors and executioners of the Christian martyrs found Christ themselves as a result of their fearless witness.

Because, however, of the severity of their trials, Jesus declared, the faith of many of the Christians would fail. "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." And "many shall be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another. . . . Brother shall betray brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death."

In confirmation of this we have the independent authority of Tacitus again, who mentions that "first they were seized who confessed that they were Christians, and then on their information a vast multitude was convicted."

Yet while persecution would cause "the love of many" to grow "cold," the very opposition to the Gospel would result in its being disseminated as the persecuted church was scattered abroad to the ends of the inhabited world. Paul himself carried the Gospel to Asia Minor, Greece, Italy, and even beyond into Spain, and there are traditions of the widespread evangelistic labours of all the other disciples. Simon and Jude, we understand, went north into Syria and Mesopotamia and Persia, Peter and John into Asia Minor, Matthew into Parthia, Andrew and Philip into Scythia, Bartholomew into North and West Asia, Thomas east into Media, Carmania, and India, and Matthias into Ethiopia. So to every part of the empire and beyond, the early believers carried the Gospel. Dodderidge declares that churches were planted in all those places "in less than thirty years after the death of Christ" and "before the destruction of Jerusalem."

The fact that "prodigious numbers" of Christians, according to Suetonius, and "vast multitudes," according to Tacitus, could have been put to death in the first general persecution, shows how widely the faith had been spread by the days of Nero, and supports Paul's declaration that before his death the Gospel had been preached to "every creature" under heaven.

Thus before the "end" of the Jewish nation came, the words of Jesus, "This Gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come," received their primary fulfilment.

To the Jews in Palestine and in the dispersion, the fall of Jerusalem was "the end" of their national hopes, but for those whose faith was in Christ it was a confirmation of the outworking purpose of God.

Doubtless, when the "end" came for Jerusalem many of the Christians expected the immediate establishment of the kingdom of glory, just as after the resurrection the disciples had inquired, "Wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" But gradually, as time passed and Jesus did not return, they began to see that this cycle of persecution and witness, apostasy and triumph through endurance, which had characterized the first phase of the church up to the "end" of the Jewish nation, was to have a wider fulfilment both in time and in extent before the "end of the world" and the coming of the Son of man in His kingdom.

This sequence of events leading up to the "end" of Jerusalem, was indeed a miniature of a vastly wider fulfilment in the story of the church in the world through the centuries leading up to the "end" of all things.

As the Gospel continued to go forth into the world, other false prophets would arise with false teachings concerning Christ's kingdom to deceive those who were not fortified by the "blessed hope" and these, as later Bible writers were to reveal, would culminate in the great apostasy designated "the mystery of iniquity" and "Antichrist."

As the apostate church of Christ's day persecuted the true remnant, so the apostate church of subsequent ages would harass the true people of God. Many, in consequence, would lose their hold of the truth, but a faithful remnant, braced by faith and sustained by grace, would maintain their witness "even unto death."

As the story of apostasy and persecution would be repeated in subsequent centuries, so also would the increasing strife among the nations. The "wars and rumours of wars" of the first century would be but the "beginning" of centuries of national revolutions and international strife which would not cease till the Prince of peace Himself should come.

So the situation which obtained before the "end" of Jerusalem would be duplicated on a world scale in the days before the "end" of all things. The "last days" of the world would be an era of unparalleled war and strife, abounding iniquity, natural catastrophes, moral decline, and spiritual apostasy. Yet against the background of a perishing world the Gospel of the kingdom in the form of God's last message of mercy would be preached for a "witness," not this time merely to the Roman world, but to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people," on the face of the earth, for the gathering out of the last faithful remnant. Then would come the "end" not of a city or a nation, but of the world.

To the wicked of the last days the "end" will be a day of darkness and judgment, as it was for the sinful and unheeding inhabitants of Jerusalem, but for those whose trust is in God it will be a day of glorious realization as Jesus, according to His promise, "comes" at long last in all His glory to establish His eternal kingdom.

This chapter is based on Matthew 24:1-14; Mark 13:1-13; Luke 21:1-19.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Not One Stone!

IN His great panoramic prophecy on the Mount of Olives, Jesus purposely gave no indication of the time which would elapse between the "end" of Jerusalem and the subsequent "end" of the world. At the same time He wanted to provide His people with adequate "signs" of His outworking purposes for their immediate guidance and for the guidance of the church in subsequent ages. So, following His initial survey of the trials and triumphs of the church, Jesus began to set forth in greater detail the sequence of events in the drama of history.

His next words, "When ye therefore shall see" clearly introduces what was to be a recapitulation of what He had previously described in general terms, with the object of providing specific "signs," first of the end of the Jewish age and then of the end of all things. These would enable the "last days" of the Jewish nation and the "last days" of earth's history to be clearly recognized by the "watching" ones.

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)," Jesus began, "then let them which be in Judea flee to the mountains . . . and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto."

The immediate sign of the end for Jerusalem, declared Jesus, would be the appearance before the city of the "abomination of desolation," spoken of by the prophet Daniel. Those who had "read" and "understood" his prophecies, as Jesus admonished, would have no difficulty in connecting this power with the "abomination that maketh desolate" referred to several times by Daniel, and identifying it as the power of Rome. The "idols upon the battlements" at the time of Christ's crucifixion were, of course, the pagan ensigns carried at the head of the Roman legions and the images of the emperors on their shields, for all the idols of the heathen were an "abomination" to the Jews.

True also to Daniel's prophecy it was a Roman "prince" who had charge of the operations against Jerusalem, for when Vespasian left Palestine to become the tenth of the Roman Cæsars, he left the Jewish campaign in the hands of his son Titus, who subsequently assumed the royal purple.

Now, said Jesus, if His people were on the watch for the first sign of the approach of the "desolator," opportunity would be given them to "flee" for safety to "the mountains," as Lot was warned to flee from doomed Sodom. But there would not be much time and they would have to take immediate action.

If they were on the housetop, perhaps storing food, when the moment of escape came, they were not to "come down to take any thing" out of their houses, but were to descend quickly by the outer stair and hasten from the city.

Likewise, if they were "in the field" clad only in light, working garments, they were not to take time to go back home for their tunics or sheepskin coats, but at once to make their escape.

Because the emergency when it came would be a trying experience for all, and particularly for expectant mothers and those with young children, the church were exhorted to pray that their escape would not have to be made during the "winter," when the weather would be cold and travel difficult, and the Jordan would be in flood. They were also to pray that their flight would not need to be "on the Sabbath day," in order that their worship might not be disturbed.

The latter reference is of special significance, showing as it does, that many years after the founding of the Christian church, the believers would still be observing and worshipping on the Sabbath day. This makes it very clear that Jesus never intended, after His resurrection, that the seventh day of the fourth commandment was to be replaced by the first day of the week as the Christian's rest day. Indeed, contrary to the belief of many Christians today, both the Bible and church history unite in confirming that the Sabbath was faithfully observed by many in the Christian church not for decades but for centuries, until it was obscured by apostasy and neglect, in favour of the Christianized pagan feast day, Sun-day.

So the church watched and prayed through the years that followed Christ's ascension, as expectantly they waited for the final "sign" Jesus had given them. And when, in A.D. 66, they saw the Roman forces under Cestius Gallus, prefect of Syria, approaching the city to quell the insurrection against the procurator Gessius Florus, they knew that the time was near.

Whether any Christians left Jerusalem on the approach of Cestius is not recorded. Possibly his descent upon the city was too swift for many to make their escape and the great majority remained in the city during the two years that he unsuccessfully besieged it. Then for some strange reason, about the time of the Feast of Tabernacles in A.D. 69, Cestius withdrew his forces and beat a retreat. The Jews, thinking to emulate the heroic deeds of the Maccabees sallied out of the city in pursuit and only with difficulty did Cestius extricate his forces, leaving much spoil in Jewish hands.

The Christians, however, who had "read and understood" both Christ's prophecy and the prophecies of Daniel, did not share the elation of the Jews, but saw in the raising of the siege a providential pause before the city's final destruction. And so, as they had prayed, just before the onset of winter, and we may well believe on some other day than the Sabbath, they made haste and left the doomed city, crossing over the Jordan to Pella, one of the cities of the Decapolis, about seventeen miles south of the Sea of Galilee. There, in the territory of Agrippa, who had remained loyal to Rome, they were safe from molestation. So, when the city fell, not a single Christian perished.

In one or two brief sentences Jesus went on to describe the catastrophe which descended upon Jerusalem after the escape of His followers:

"For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written [from Moses to Malachi] may be fulfilled. . . . For there shall be great distress in the land, and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations."

If we had to depend solely on the Roman account of the taking of Jerusalem our information about it might have been comparatively meagre. It was surely, therefore, in the providence of God that there was in the service of the Romans, a Jewish general and historian, Josephus, who was able to record a vivid eyewitness account of the city's last tragic days.

The inspired resistance of the Jews who had pursued after Cestius doubtless confirmed the Roman determination to break the spirit of the Jews once and for all, and toward Passover in A.D. 70, Vespasian, after restoring Roman power in the north, advanced against Jerusalem. On his way, however, he heard of the death of Nero. At once he set off for Rome to claim the imperial throne, leaving his son, Titus Flavius Vespasian, with orders to destroy Jerusalem if the Jews refused to surrender.

Titus set up his camp on Mount Scopus on the fourteenth of Abib, just as Passover was beginning, and began to deploy his four legions of Syrian and Numidian auxiliaries, some 60,000 men in all, against the city.

The initial plan of Titus, whom the historian Suetonius has told us was "most benevolent by nature," was to induce the Jews to surrender, and if they had been willing to capitulate they would doubtless have been treated with consideration. But their obstinacy, stimulated by their success against Cestius, forced Titus to do what was for him a "strange work" and made certain the fulfilment of the prophecy of doom.

After some weeks of ineffective attacks, Titus ordered his troops to build a wall round the entire city, and in the incredibly short period of three days the task was accomplished by the tenth of the month Sivan.

Still the Jews, encouraged by false prophets to believe that the city could not be taken, refused to give in, and the Romans began their final assault.

As a result of some of the defence towers being deserted, Mount Zion fell first and the people who had not perished by famine were mercilessly slaughtered or burned in their own houses. The north wall was next breached and the Tower of Antonia was invested, leaving only the temple itself in the hands of the Jews.

Titus had been anxious to preserve "this marvellous magnificence" as a monument to his victory, but it now became clear that he would have to take it also by storm. On the ninth day of Abib flaming braziers were thrust against the cedar doors of the temple area. The gold and silver coverings melted and the hard cedar wood was set alight. The Jews tried to arrest the progress of the Romans by setting fire to the outer courts themselves, but the soldiers advanced steadily into the sanctuary itself. A soldier threw a burning brand into a window of one of the rooms round the holy place and soon the building was in flames. Titus ordered the quenching of the fire, but the Roman soldiers, incensed by the stubbornness of the resistance, now paid no heed. Soon the whole sanctuary was a mass of flames. The walls fell in, the cedarwood roof collapsed into the inferno of fire which lit up the surrounding hills, and by morning the temple was a smouldering ruin.

As a reward for his victory in Palestine, Vespasian conferred upon his son the title Imperator, and at the Colosseum end of the Forum in Rome the great Arch of Titus was erected further to commemorate his achievement. On the inside of the arch are depicted the golden table of showbread, the golden candlestick, and two trumpets, being carried in procession in his triumph.

Josephus estimates that in the siege over a million Jews perished. In addition 90,000 were sent into slavery, the able-bodied to the Egyptian mines, while the rest were scattered through the provinces of the empire. No fewer than 11,000 perished while the separation and dispatch of the captives was in progress.

Moses had declared that if the Israelites failed to follow the Lord they would be carried captive among the Gentiles. This was in part fulfilled in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities, but after the war of A.D. 70 the Jews were literally scattered throughout the whole Roman world.

The total destruction of the city also fulfilled to the letter the words of Jesus that "not one stone" would remain upon another when the Romans had done their worst. While the great pagan temples like the Parthenon at Athens, the temple of Jupiter at Baalbek, and the temples of Amon at Karnak and Luxor are still massive ruins, not one stone of the magnificent temple of Jerusalem has been left in place.

Sixty years after its destruction the Emperor Hadrian built upon the site his city of Ælia, named after himself, and put a Roman colony in it, so that, as Jesus prophesied, Jerusalem was literally "trodden down of the Gentiles."

In A.D. 637 the city was surrendered to the Moslem Khalif Omar, and in A.D. 688 the Dome of the Rock was erected by Abd el Melek to cover the temple site. Thereafter, except for about a century from 1099-1187, when it was in Crusader hands, the Saracens and Turks held the city till 1917, while the scattered and persecuted Jews were hounded from country to country throughout Europe, Asia, and Africa.

This chapter is based on Matthew 24:15-20; Mark 13:14-18; Luke 21:20-24.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Watching and Waiting

IN Luke's account of Christ's great prophecy on the Mount of Olives, the interim between the "end" of the Jewish nation and the "end" of the world is spanned in a single sentence: "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled."

The end of the Jewish nation would mark the commencement of a period during which the Gospel which the Jews had rejected would go to the Gentiles. During the whole of the "times of the Gentiles" Jerusalem would remain in the hands of alien powers, but when this period had fully run its course, Jesus would return in glory and a "New Jerusalem" would ultimately be established as the metropolis of His promised kingdom.

But now while Luke, in his gospel, quotes only Jesus' reference to "the times of the Gentiles" stretching on down the ages to the day of His return in glory, Matthew's longer account reveals that He went on to detail a succession of momentous events during this period, the recognition of which would give His people an "understanding of the times" and would finally alert them to the approaching end.

First, said Jesus, there would be, after the destruction of Jerusalem, "great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." So severe would it be, He said, that "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

In one of his prophecies, John the Revelator declared that the church would have "tribulation ten days" and without a doubt this refers to the first period of persecution which came upon the early Christians at the hands of pagan Rome. For, beginning with Nero's onslaught on the Christians in Rome in A.D. 57, when

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"Be ye ready," is the message of Jesus to His waiting church.
By E. AZAMBRE

Peter and Paul, among many thousands of others, were martyred, there were exactly ten pagan persecutions down to the beginning of the fourth century. Of these, the last and most widespread continued for precisely ten years, from A.D. 303-313 and extended as far as Britain, creating the first British martyr, St. Alban.

Hardly, however, had the pagan persecutions been terminated by the conversion of Constantine and the issuing of his tolerant Edict of Milan in A.D. 313, than a far longer period of persecution was initiated by the rise to power and domination of the papal church of Rome.

That this was the "great tribulation" foreshadowed by Jesus is clearly shown by the detailed delineation of this period by both the prophet Daniel and John the Revelator, and also by its most precise dating in their time prophecies.

It was to continue, they declared, for a "time, times, and the dividing of time," "a thousand two hundred and three score days," or "forty-two months," all of which prophetic periods add up to 1,260 literal years, which history conclusively places between A.D. 538, when the power of the Papacy was established in Italy, and 1798 when it was actually abolished for a time by Napoleon.

For the relief of the tried people of God, Jesus promised that those days of "the tribulation" would be "shortened," and just as the prophecy stated, they were providentially mitigated through the multiplication of Protestant States as a result of the Reformation of the sixteenth century. By their rise, papal power in Europe was progressively restricted, and persecution did virtually come to an end some decades before the prophesied end of its period of supremacy.

Jesus did not further elaborate on the experience of the church during "the tribulation," but went on to designate three subsequent "signs" which would warn the church of the imminent coming of Jesus in glory and the "end" of the world.

First, there would appear signs in the heavens. "Immediately after the tribulation of those days," He said, "shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven."

As "the tribulation" was to terminate, according to Daniel, in 1798, and the actual days of persecution ended some time before this, we would expect that a little while before the end of the eighteenth century the first of the heavenly signs would begin to appear. It is, therefore, remarkable that in the astronomical history of the past two centuries these three phenomena have occurred in precisely the order indicated.

On May 19, 1780, after the "shortened" period of persecution had ended, and just before the actual close of the 1,260 years of papal dominion, there occurred the remarkable "Dark Day" of which Noah Webster wrote in his *Explanatary and Pronouncing Vocabulary:* "Birds sang their evening songs, disappeared and became silent; fowls went to roost: cattle sought the barnyard; and candles were lighted in the houses." "The true cause of this remarkable phenomenon is not known," he added, but another contemporary writer, Thomas Dwight, asserts, "A very general opinion prevailed that the day of judgment was at hand."

The following night, the second of the celestial phenomena was fulfilled when the moon took on the appearance of "blood" and was so completely obscured that "a sheet of white paper held within a few inches of the eyes was equally invisible with the blackest velvet."—Dr. Samuel Tenney in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society,* Vol. 1, pages 97, 98.

Finally, some fifty years later, on November 13, 1833, there occurred what H. Barrett in his *Geography of the Heavens* describes as "the most sublime phenomenon of shooting stars of which the world has furnished any record."

The word "fall" in the prophecy suggests a long continued shower of stars, and the comparison with unripe "figs" shaken off by the wind in a repetition of the sign by John the Revelator, indicates that the shower would appear to radiate from one particular point in the heavens. Both these specifications were exactly fulfilled by the spectacular "shower" of 1833 which emanated "from the constellation Leo, . . . continued through the whole night, and covered no inconsiderable portion of the earth's surface."

Thus nearly nineteen centuries before they were destined to appear, God foretold these last-day celestial phenomena and exactly on time the "signs" appeared and were recognized as promised tokens of Christ's soon return.

The second of the "signs" for which Jesus told His people to watch was to be in the religious world of the last days. Just as in the midst of the general expectancy of His first coming, many were deceived by erroneous doctrines as to the manner in which He would appear, so before Christ's second advent Satan would seek to divert attention from it by false theories concerning the manner of His return.

"If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there," Jesus warned; "believe it not. . . . If they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

Now it is a remarkable fact that, following the end of papal domination when General Berthier took the Pope into exile in France, the first half of the nineteenth century saw not only a new interest in the prophecies of Christ's second coming in both the Old and the New World, but also the rise of many false religious movements, two of the most important and widespread of which corresponded exactly with the two deviations described by Christ. On the one hand the Mormon movement has led thousands "into the desert" to build a temple to which they assert Jesus will return, while on the other, the great movement of modern spiritualism has for the past century been deceiving multitudes into believing that the spiritual world is accessible through the "secret chambers" of the séance.

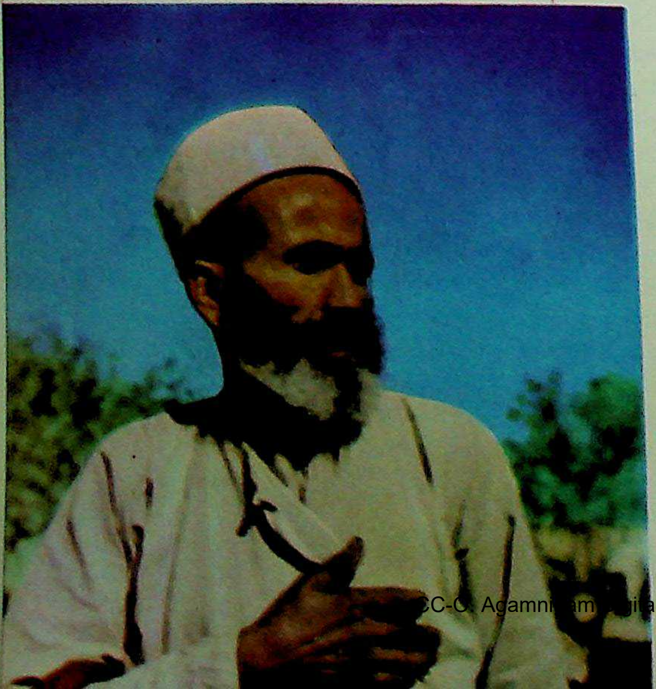
The third area in which the signs of the returning Christ would be seen would be in the affairs of the nations. "And there shall be . . . distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth; for the powers of heaven shall be shaken."

BELOW

Two bearded Orthodox Jews, in their characteristic dress, shopping in a Jerusalem market.

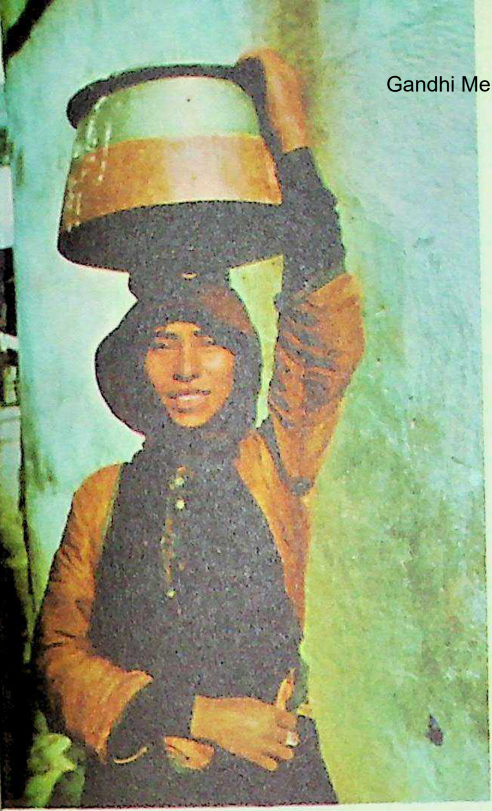
ABOVE

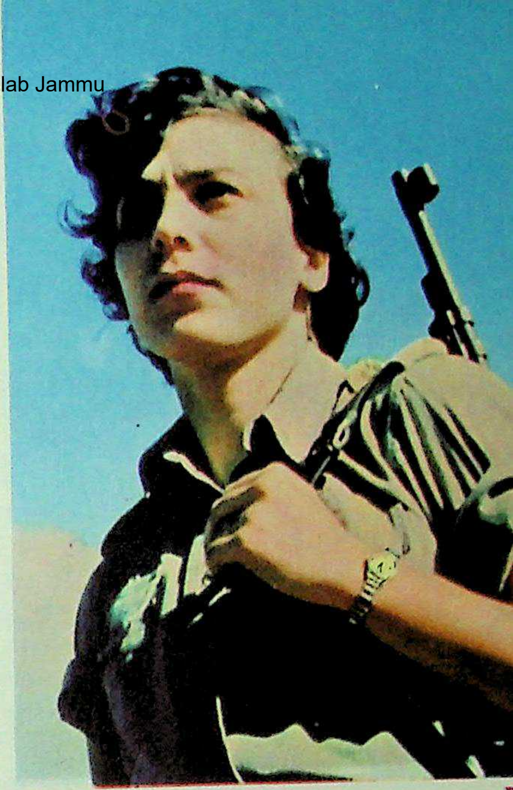
A little schoolgirl in one of the Jewish settlements in Palestine brings home a bunch of wild flowers she has gathered from the surrounding fields.



LEFT

A patriarchal Arab who remained in his village in Jewish Palestine after the flight of many to the adjoining Moslem lands.





LEFT

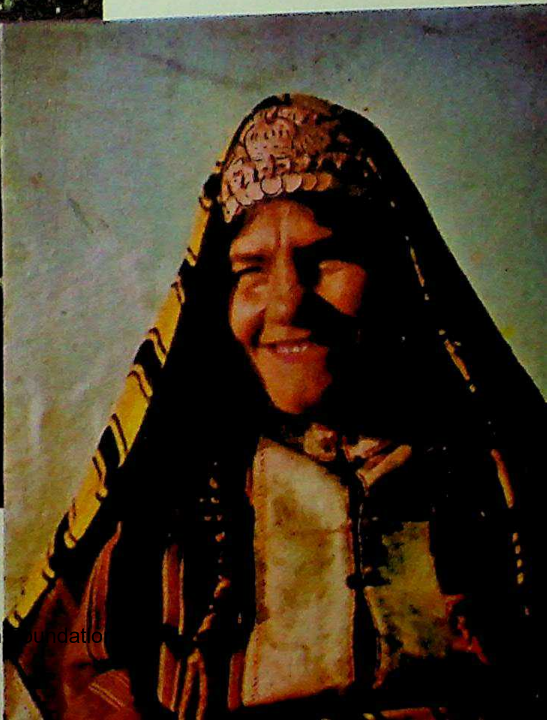
A girl from an Arab village in Palestine.

RIGHT

A Jewish girl takes her turn of guard duty at a settlement near the frontier.

BELOW

Jews of many countries have returned to settle in Palestine. This Jewish immigrant is wearing the traditional dress of Morocco, from whence she has come.



Many of the traditional holy places of Palestine are in the care of priests of the Greek Orthodox Church (left) and the Roman Catholic Church (above).

The ever-moving sea is commonly used in Bible prophecy for the restless nations of the earth, and so Jesus here by a picture of "the sea and the waves roaring," indicates that the days immediately preceding His return would be characterized by the spread of war and revolution from nation to nation, until eventually the whole earth would be engulfed in universal cataclysm.

There have, of course, been wars and rumours of wars all down the centuries, but the expression "with perplexity" in our version indicates a plight so desperate that there would be literally "no way out."

That the world finds itself in just such a situation today is evidenced by the fact that the life-long optimist, H. G. Wells, who died a few years ago, entitled his last book, *The World at the End of Its Tether,* and in it he used this precise form of words to describe the present human predicament. "There is no way out," he wrote, "there is no way through. This is the end."

"Men's hearts," said Jesus, would be "failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth." Certainly no more apt description could be penned of the state of mind of millions today. As Professor Urey has said, even the scientists are "frightened men" because they know better than anyone else the menace which threatens all existence on the earth.

Not only would the world be torn by national and international strife, but, Jesus went on to say, it would be sunk in moral corruption. "As the days of Noe were," He declared, "so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." The days before the Flood were characterized by increasing godlessness, moral depravity, and violence, and so would be the days just before the second coming of Christ.

Other Bible prophets have expanded this picture of last-day moral degradation. "This know also," wrote Paul to Timothy, "that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof." And looking at the moral and spiritual condition of our time we can surely see every characteristic listed by Paul.

But, declared Jesus, in spite of false prophets, both within and without the church, the last message of mercy would be carried "for a witness" into "all the world" to gather out His faithful remnant. And true to the prophecy, the end of the nineteenth century did indeed see the departure of William Carey for India in 1793 to inaugurate the era of modern missions. In the first eighteen centuries of the Christian era, it is estimated that the Bible was translated into no more than seventy-one languages, but by the end of the nineteenth century it was speaking in 567, and by the mid-twentieth century it had been put, in whole or in part, into a "thousand tongues" and more.

The fact, therefore, that the last century and a half since the end of "the tribulation" has seen every one of the heavenly signs predicted by Jesus, a moral collapse paralleled only by the days of Noah, and the intensification of war and strife among the nations to a point where, humanly speaking, there is "no way out," with at the same time an unprecedented expansion of the Gospel witness and revival of the advent hope, compels us to conclude that we stand today at the point of "no return" and that Christ must soon appear to deliver His people from a world fast rushing to its doom.

What will take place at His second advent Jesus next described in His prophecy: "Then shall all the tribes" of the wicked "mourn" because of Him. In terror and amazement, the Revelator adds, they will seek the "dens and rocks of the mountains" to escape the onrush of judgment, but in vain. As the eye of the "eagle" descries his prey at a great distance and sweeps down upon it, so the angels of judgment will unfailingly seek out the wicked. There will be no place to hide!

But while for the wicked the day of Christ's return will be a day of darkness and of anguish, for the waiting saints it will be a day of inexpressible joy. As they see the "sign of the Son of man" the cry will go up, "This is our God: we have waited for Him, and He will save us: . . . we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation."

Two things, therefore, Jesus sought to emphasize as He concluded this great prophecy of His return: first, that His people should be ever watching for Him, and secondly, that they should be ready to meet Him when He comes.

At no time, He said, would the actual "day and hour" of His coming be made known to men. This would remain hidden in the depths of His counsel, even from the "angels of heaven." But if His people were constantly on the watch, the signs He had given would provide sufficient warning of His return.

To emphasize the need of constant readiness for the coming of the King and of the kingdom, Jesus ended His prophecy with three brief but forceful parables.

First, He used the familiar picture of the "porter" left behind to mind the house while the occupants are away. "The Son of man," He said, "is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch."

For the porter to be unready or even sleeping when the master returned would be the most culpable neglect and would merit instant dismissal. "Watch ye therefore," Jesus said, "for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping."

For His next illustration Jesus referred to the necessity, in Eastern countries not equipped with the safe deposits of our modern civilization, of being ever on the watch against the surprise visit of thieves. "Know this," Jesus said, "that if the good man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up," or literally "digged through" by the robbers. As so often unprepared householders have been taken unawares by the surprise entrance of the thief, so the final crisis will come as a surprise and shock to a sleeping, heedless world. "Therefore," warned Jesus, "be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."

In these two illustrations Jesus laid chief stress upon the importance of "watching" for the coming King. In His third parable He pointed out that the period of watching was not to be one of mere passive waiting but of zealous activity on the Master's behalf.

Recalling to the minds of the disciples the faithful steward diligently administering his master's affairs in his absence, Jesus said, "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler of his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when He cometh shall find so doing," for He will promote him to added responsibility in His kingdom.

The day of His coming would, He said finally, exactly parallel the days of the Flood. "As the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For as in the days that were before the Flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the Flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken and the other left."

As the end draws relentlessly on, men and women will outwardly seem indistinguishable in their daily occupations from each other, but when the day of judgment comes the all-seeing God will infallibly separate the true-hearted and righteous from the wicked. Families will be divided. Business associations will be severed. Neighbours sharing common tasks will be separated and each will "go to his own place."

As Noah and his family were "taken" out of the judgment of the Flood and the early Christians were "taken" out of Jerusalem before its doom came, so the people of God in the last days will be "caught up" by the angels out of the final overflowing judgment to "meet the Lord in the air," leaving the wicked to their terror and destruction.

With what urgency, therefore, should we who are living on the very verge of these momentous events heed His concluding appeal, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch."

This chapter is based on Matthew 24:21-51; Mark 13:19-37; Luke 21:25-38.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

The Ten Virgins

AFTER His wonderful discourse on the Mount of Olives, Jesus walked with His disciples through the gathering darkness to Bethany, where they spent the night.

Of the next day, the thirteenth of Nisan, or Wednesday of the Passion Week, nothing whatever is recorded. Jesus did not go again to the Temple, and the approach of Passover kept the crowds away from Bethany, so that He was able to spend the day quietly with His hospitable friends.

Naturally the disciples would have further questions to ask about the coming of the kingdom, and it seems most likely that the parables of the ten virgins, the talents, and the sheep and goats, which are recorded only by Matthew, were told by Jesus in the quiet seclusion of the home at Bethany.

"Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins," Jesus began, "which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom."

On more than one occasion He had used the joyous picture of an Eastern wedding to symbolize the inauguration of the divine Son in His kingdom, and certainly the comparison was most meaningful.

Marriages in Bible times were invariably celebrated at night, and it will be following the darkest hour of earth's night that the dawn will break upon the kingdom of Christ.

There are clear spiritual parallels, too, in the procedures of a Palestinian wedding. When the time of the marriage came, the bridegroom would go forth from his father's house, accompanied by his friends, to the home of the bride. Then, having received her from the hand of her parents, he would return with the procession to his father's house for the wedding feast. In the same way when the great day of the marriage feast of the kingdom arrives, Jesus will come forth from His heavenly home, accompanied by a retinue of holy angels, to claim His bride, the church, with whom He will return to the marriage feast in His Father's house in heaven.

For the purpose of this parable, however, the people of God are not represented as the bride of Christ, but as the friends of the bride who are waiting with lighted lamps to join in the procession to the marriage feast.

The symbol of virginity is used, as elsewhere, to typify the purity of their faith, their absolute loyalty to God, and the completeness of their separation from the world. And as ten was the usual number of lamp bearers in a bridal procession, the ten virgins fittingly represent the waiting remnant of God.

The lighted lamps which each guest carried well symbolize the bright flame of Christian experience which is the necessary preparation to meet Jesus when He comes. However beautiful the shape or highly decorated the exterior of the lamp, it is useless unless it is lighted. So also are we until our lives are lighted at the flame of the Spirit of God.

David realized this when he prayed that God would light his "candle," or lamp. Paul, speaking to those who had found Christ, used the same picture when he said, "Now are ye light in the Lord," and bade them walk as "children of light." Jesus similarly declared of His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world."

Because of the smallness of the reservoir in the little oriental saucer-lamps they needed frequent refilling with oil. Likewise, the flame of spiritual experience needs not only to be kindled by God but must be daily replenished, as the Psalmist says, with "fresh oil," through worship, meditation on God's Word, and prayer.

In His discourse on the Mount of Olives, Jesus had warned that not all would be waiting to receive Him at His coming, and in this parable He portrays five of the virgins as "wise" and five as "foolish." The wise "took oil in their vessels," that is, they maintained their readiness to meet the Bridegroom by the constant renewal of the flame of their spiritual experience. The "foolish," on the other hand, represent those who, though they have taken the initial step of committal to God and accepted the invitation to the wedding feast, nevertheless fail to realize the importance of keeping their lamps "trimmed and burning." If such are not awakened to their need of "oil in their vessels with their lamps," the coming of Jesus will find them unprepared like the foolish virgins when the bridegroom's approach was announced.

In His previous discourse Jesus had intimated that the difference between the ready and the unready would not be outwardly apparent during the waiting period. On the housetop, in the fields, or at the household chores they might be working together, and not until the moment of crisis came would it be manifest that one was ready and the other was not. So in this parable, while the bridegroom tarried they all "slumbered and slept," snatching a little rest so as to be fresh and lively when the bridegroom came. Only in the excitement of preparation when at midnight the cry was heard, "Behold, the bridegroom cometh," did the fatal lack on the part of the "foolish" virgins become apparent. Not until "all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps," did the foolish realize that their lamps were flickering out and they had no reserve of oil in their flasks. So in the coming day the profession of many will be tragically exposed as "a form of godliness" devoid of any reserve of spiritual power.

In alarm the foolish virgins in the parable "said unto the wise, Give us of your oil: for our lamps are gone out [lit., going out]." But obviously the wise virgins could not take the risk of giving away some of their oil and not having enough to keep their lamps burning through the feast, and so they replied, very properly, "Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you." "Go ye rather to them that sell," they urged, "and buy for yourselves."

The spiritual application here is evident. If the loan of oil by the wise virgins to the foolish ones was possible though unfair to them, the transfer from one to another of the spiritual experience necessary to qualify for a place at Christ's table, is actually impossible. Our parents or friends may be instrumental in directing us to the Source of the "oil" of grace, but character can be obtained only by one's self for one's self from the divine source of supply. No proxy can make up for our neglect.

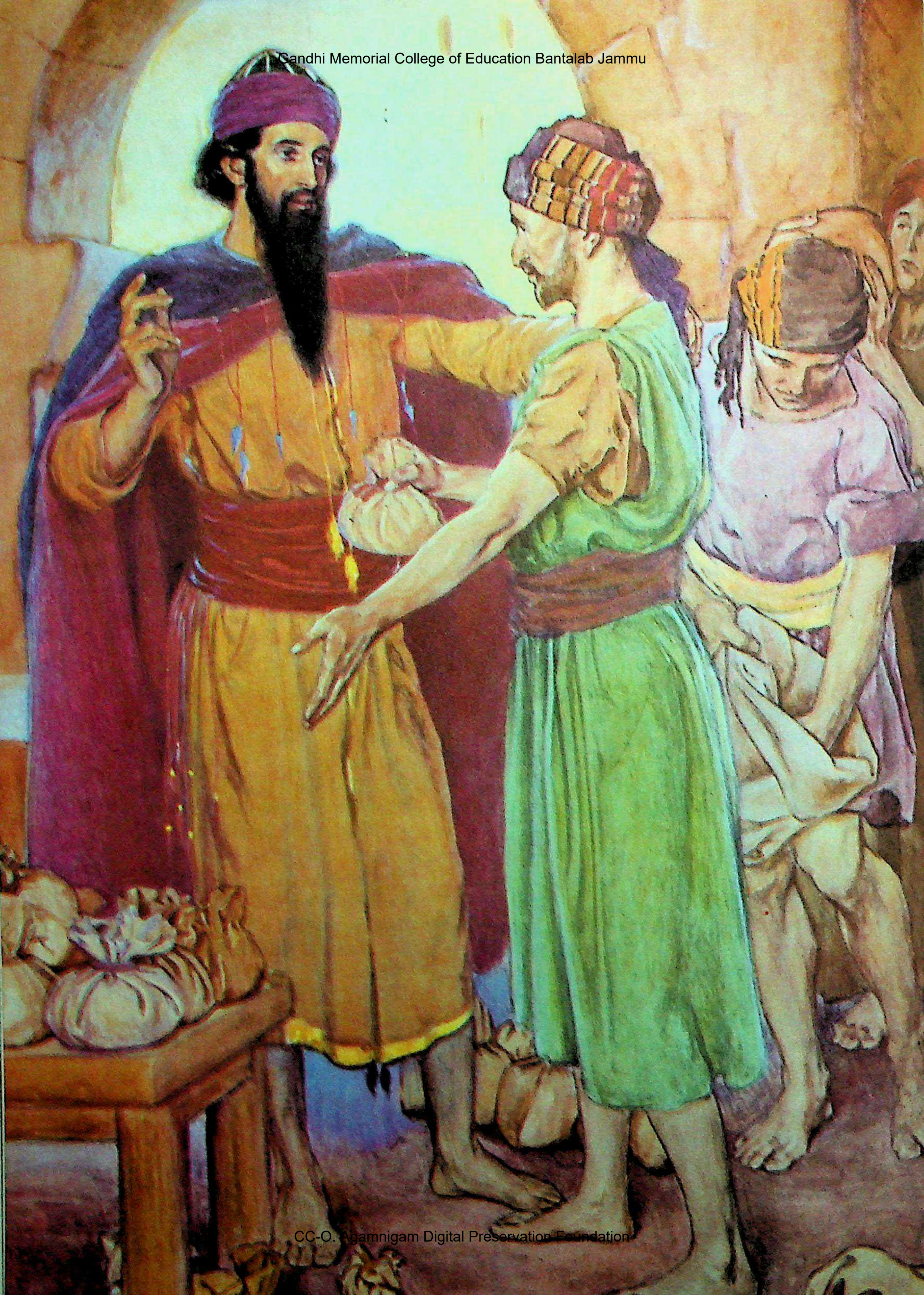
It is not stated in the parable whether the foolish virgins found any oil vendor still open, but the Bible makes it very clear that any who expect spiritual grace to be available to the unready in the day of Christ's appearing will be sadly disappointed. In that day, the Bible tells us, there will be "a famine" of the Word. Men will run frenziedly to and fro seeking the Word they have so long neglected, but they will not find it. Doubtless, this was the experience of the foolish virgins, and when they hurried back to the bridegroom's house, their alarm was increased when they found that he had gone in and "the door was shut." In their distress they knocked repeatedly crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but to their consternation the reply of the bridegroom came, "Verily I say unto you, I know you not."

Solemn indeed is the warning of this parable, that while today the door is open wide to sinners, and Jesus is still pleading, "Him that cometh unto Me I will no wise cast out," a time is coming when the door of salvation will be shut and the decree will go forth, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still." When that time comes the character of all will be fixed and the destiny of all will be sealed. Dreadful will be the words which will then fall upon the ears of the unprepared, "I know you not."

Once again, therefore, Jesus pleaded as He closed His parable, "Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

So, as the midnight hour of earth's history draws on, we will do well to examine the lamp of our spiritual life to see that it is "trimmed and burning." If perchance our lamp is burning dim or smoky through the accumulation of sin or the neglect of the means of spiritual grace, He will gladly rekindle the dying flame of our lives and refill our vessels with the oil of His Spirit; but we must ask Him to do it now, before it is too late.

This chapter is based on Matthew 25:1-13.



CHAPTER
TWENTY-THREE

The Parable of the Talents

IN the parable of the ten virgins, the guests invited to the wedding slept while they waited for the bridegroom, in order that they might be rested when the marriage feast began.

This was, of course, true to the circumstances of an eastern wedding, but it was not intended to portray the occupation of the people of God as they await the return of the divine Bridegroom. To do this Jesus told another parable.

This time He likened "the kingdom of heaven" to a "man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods." Here Jesus is the Householder, the "far country" was heaven to which He was to return after the conclusion of His earthly mission, while the servants represent those to whom He has committed the ministry of the Gospel during His absence.

In the work of God on earth each is given a responsibility proportionate to his God-given capacity to serve. This Jesus indicated when He went on, "And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey."

In monetary value a silver talent would be equivalent to about £200, the two talents to £400, and the five to £1,000. The latter sum, though considerable, was not out of the ordinary for a trusted slave to handle for his master.

In the distribution of the master's resources an important difference will be noted between this story and the parable of the pounds which Jesus told as He came up the Jericho road. In the earlier parable the emphasis was on the acceptance or rejection of the gift of salvation which is common to all, and so each of the servants received the same amount, namely, "one pound." In this parable Jesus is dealing with the use His servants make of the differing gifts which He dispenses

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"Well done," said the master to his faithful servant.
By W. G. SIMMONDS

to each "severally as He will," for the upbuilding of His church and the hastening of His kingdom. As Paul mentioned in his epistles to the Corinthians and to the Ephesians, Christ appoints some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some teachers, and so on, according to the needs of His work and the capacity of the human instruments. For the use of these diverse gifts each is severally responsible, and will be called to render an account in the day of judgment.

Continuing His parable, Jesus told how the servants shouldered their various responsibilities. "He that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two."

These servants represent the faithful people of God who, while they watch and wait for the coming King, occupy themselves in diligent service for the advancement of the kingdom. Some are given great talents by means of which multitudes are gathered into Christ's church. Others may have fewer gifts, but by using them faithfully, each is able to make a significant contribution to the cause of God.

The third servant, however, who had received only one talent, though he enjoyed all the amenities of his master's household, felt no responsibility to exert himself on his behalf. Aggrieved that he had only been entrusted with a single talent, and arguing that his small service would not count one way or the other, he decided that it was not worth while doing anything. So he "went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money," so that he would be able to return it safely when the lord returned from his journey. Thereafter he doubtless occupied himself with his own selfish pursuits.

Sad to say, there are Christians who adopt this attitude. Because they have not been called to some great work for God they feel that there is nothing worth while which they can do, and so they do nothing.

To feel like this, however, is seriously to impugn God's purposes and providences. It was out of consideration for the lesser ability of the third servant that the householder gave him the responsibility of only one talent, but the fact that he did receive one was evidence that he could have used it to advantage. In the same way there is no soul upon whom Christ has conferred the gift of salvation who has not also received some talent for service in the place where His providence disposes, and for such he will be held as responsible as the most talented of God's servants on earth. To fail to use our one talent because that is all He has entrusted us with, is to despise the gift of God and to pass judgment on His wise providence. The lowliest task faithfully performed is as acceptable to God as the highest service, and is a necessary discipline for greater responsibility.

When at last the lord returned, the servants were called one by one to report their activities on his behalf. Then "he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more."

The man who had received two talents next came to report that he also had gained "two other talents beside them."

To each of these faithful servants the Lord said, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." It made no difference at all that one had brought five talents profit while the other had brought only two. Each had served to the full extent of his ability and so each received the same commendation. And such will be the measure of Christ's welcome for each of His faithful servants in the day of final rewards. It is faithfulness in service, whether great or small, which will win the divine approval and bring the reward of entrance into "the joy of the Lord" and higher and wider service in the kingdom of God.

When the man who had despised his one talent was called before his master he was full of excuses for his conduct. He "knew," he said, that his lord was a hard taskmaster and that he always expected of his servants more than was right. Fearing, therefore, to incur his lord's wrath if he lost his money, he decided that he would keep his talent safe and return it intact.

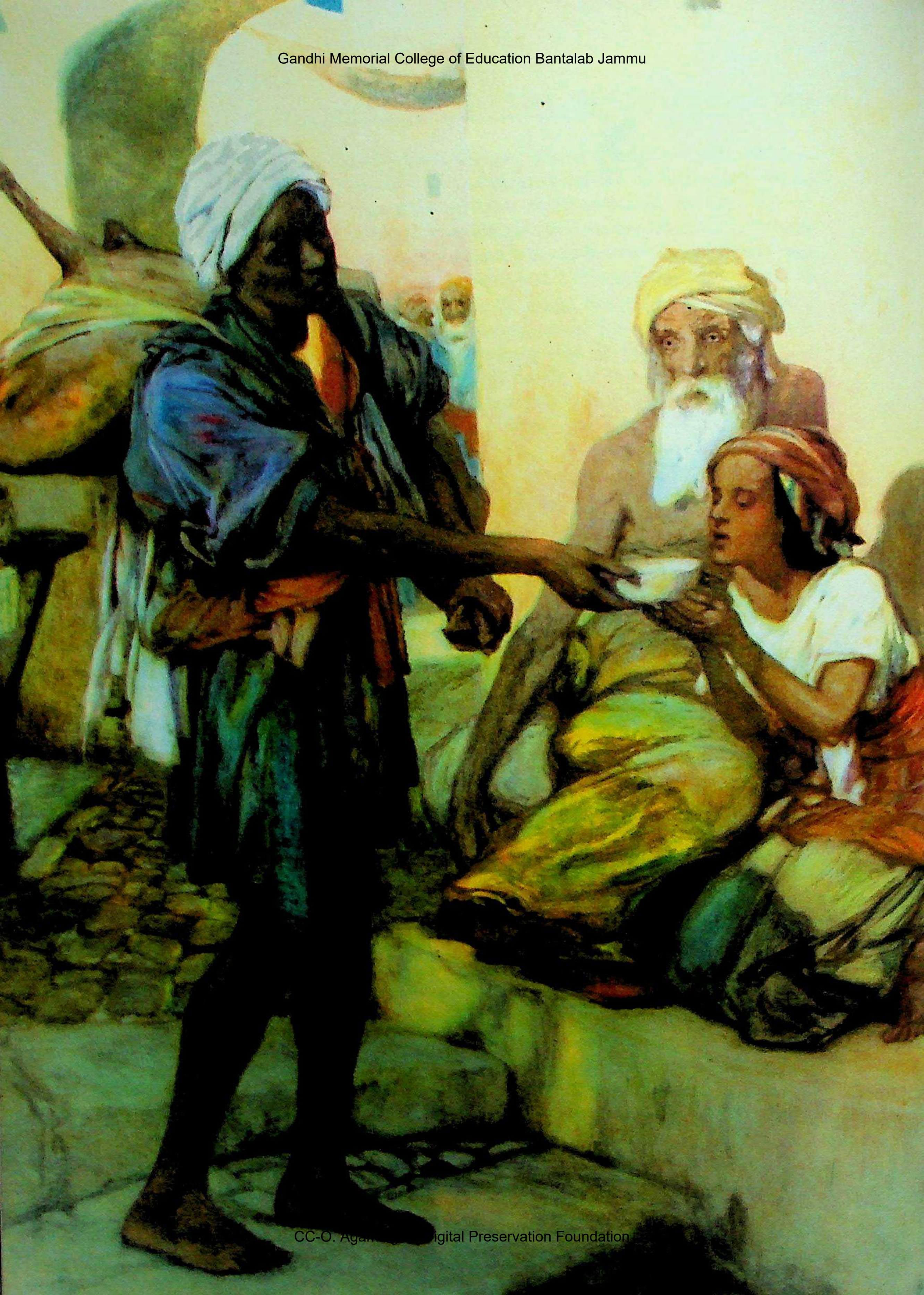
"Thou wicked and slothful servant," was the lord's immediate and summary judgment. He was "wicked' because he had sinfully maligned the character of his lord. Far from wanting to tax the man beyond his power, he had given him no more responsibility than he was capable of bearing, and all he expected of him was to do his best. Furthermore, the man was not only wicked in his assessment of his master but lazy as well; and it was for his sloth and not for his failure that he was condemned.

There is a solemn spiritual lesson in this, for all God-given talents, whether many or few, are not given to us to be used or not used as we choose. They are a stewardship for which we must give an account, and to enjoy the privileges of the household of God while neglecting to bear our responsibilities as He directs, is ingratitude indeed. Spiritual indolence is, in fact, as sinful as active wickedness.

The final act of the householder in the parable was to deprive the condemned man of the talent of which he had proved himself unworthy. In nature it is a law that unused muscles and neglected functions atrophy, and in the spiritual realm spiritual indolence must eventually result in the withdrawal of the grace man despises. Hence, the Psalmist's plea for God's patience, "Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me."

When we pray this prayer we will find that God is neither hard, demanding what we are not able to accomplish, nor lacking in patience with our weakness and frailty. But if we show ourselves unready to share the travail by which Christ's kingdom comes, we can have no grounds of complaint if at the last, like the unfaithful servant, we are "cast out" from the enjoyment of its eternal privileges.

This chapter is based on Matthew 25:14-30.



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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Sheep or Goats?

IN the last of His three parables of the kingdom, Jesus drew a vivid picture of the final separation between the righteous and the wicked in the great judgment day when Christ returns.

When Jesus came the first time He specifically stated that He came "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."

When He returns, however, "in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him," it will be to "sit upon the throne of His glory" as King and Judge of all the earth.

In that day, Jesus said, there will be gathered before Him "all nations," both Jew and Gentile, both the living and the dead, "and He shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left."

This allusion would be readily appreciated by the disciples. It was common for the shepherd of Palestine to tend both sheep and goats, the former for their wool and meat and the latter for their milk. During the day the flock would be pastured together; then at night they would be separated into different folds or into separate corners of one larger fold to sleep.

Between the two it was understandable that the shepherd should feel a deeper affection for the sheep, for while they were gentle, docile creatures, the goats were generally bad-tempered, quarrelsome, stubborn, difficult to control, and destructive animals. It was, therefore, easy to think of the sheep as the righteous and the goats as the wicked and to compare their separation when night came, to the separation of the righteous and the wicked at the end of the world's day of probation.

Every act of kindness to one of God's children is a service to Him.

By A. A. DIXON

Setting the righteous on His right hand, the side of favour and honour, Jesus will say to them, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

Explaining the basis of their selection for their eternal reward, Jesus will say, "For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me."

When the righteous profess themselves unable to recall any such service rendered to their King, He will reply, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."

On first thoughts it might seem that these grounds of reward sound rather like salvation by works, but, of course, there is no contradiction between the judgment scene here presented and the consistent teaching of Scripture that salvation is by faith alone.

As in the parable of the talents, Jesus was showing the inter-relation between faith and works. Faith is indeed the sole basis of salvation, but if by grace we are recreated by the divine Craftsman "unto good works," these will provide the outward evidence of the inward transformation. The good works Jesus enumerates are not a source of merit but an evidence of faith.

By contrast, in phrasing His condemnation of those on His left hand Jesus will say, "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink: I was a stranger and yet took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not."

When the rejected ones protest that they have no recollection of refusing to succour Him, He will reply, "Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

In their case the absence of "good works" clearly revealed that they had experienced no transformation of life through faith and that their profession was vain.

The separation completed, the righteous will enter "the kingdom prepared . . . from the foundation of the world." This kingdom was indeed first initiated in Eden, but through sin the plan was frustrated and its fulfilment had to be postponed. But when the age-long purpose of God is consummated at the second coming of Christ and the earth is renewed again in all its Edenic beauty, the gates of the kingdom will be thrown open for the saints to enter and "possess" it for ever.

But while the portion of the righteous will be glorious life in the kingdom "prepared" for their eternal habitation, the fate of the wicked will be everlasting destruction in the fire "prepared" for the devil and his angels. Everything God's love can do to lead men to choose His salvation He has done. But if they reject it they thereby choose to share Satan's doom. Man's choice is free, but, according to his choice, his destiny is "prepared."

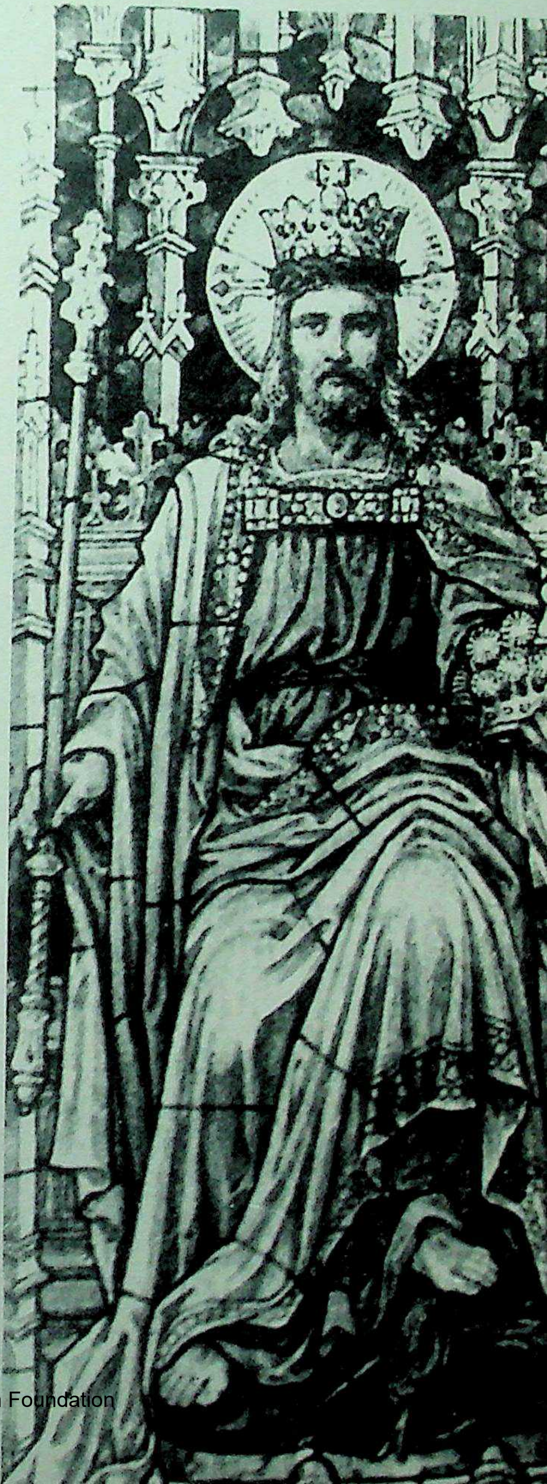
"These," said Jesus of the rejectors of His salvation, "shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

What will be the nature of this eternal punishment? Jesus clearly indicated that it would be the opposite of "life eternal," and the opposite of life eternal must be eternal death. It will not be, as so many have erroneously taught, unending conscious suffering in the fires of divine wrath. This is not only a complete misrepresentation of Scripture, but a travesty upon the character of God.

If the wicked were to be miraculously preserved in order that they might go on suffering the pains of burning for ever, they would have "eternal life" as surely as the righteous, the difference being only in the nature of that life! But nowhere does the Bible say that sinners will continue eternally. Instead, it declares categorically that they will become "as though they had not been." The Bible teaches not the "eternal punishing" of the wicked, but their "eternal punishment." The "wages of sin is death," eternal death.

Life without end will be the portion of the righteous. The fate of the wicked will be death without end.

This chapter is based on Matthew 25:31-46.



When Jesus takes His seat upon the throne of judgment, He will separate the righteous from the wicked as a shepherd separates his sheep from the goats.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Preparing the Passover

AFTER a quiet day of fellowship with His disciples and communion with God, Jesus rose on the Thursday morning to face the climactic ordeal of His earthly life.

The first three gospel writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke all call this day, the thirteenth of Nisan, "the first day of the feast of unleavened bread . . . when they killed the Passover." So as soon as the disciples joined Jesus, they began to inquire about His plans for the celebration of the feast. "Where wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Passover?" they asked. As their number exceeded the minimum of ten for a Passover group, they assumed that they would partake of the paschal meal together, and quite evidently they expected to make all preparations that day to be ready for its celebration in the evening, that is, at the beginning of the fourteenth of Nisan.

These arrangements for the Passover, however, raise an important problem of chronology, for the record in John's gospel designates the next day, Friday, as the official preparation day, and indicates that the death of Christ synchronized with the slaying of the paschal lambs which were eaten on the evening of the fifteenth of Nisan. This is evident from the fact that the sentence upon Jesus, according to John, was delivered on the day of "preparation of the passover," and that the priests would not defile themselves by entering the palace of the heathen Pilate just before the feast.

The question may well be asked, therefore, why the disciples inquired of Jesus about preparations for the Passover on Thursday morning and expected to be celebrating the feast on Thursday evening? The answer is that in the time of Christ there was some difference of opinion as to the time of celebration of the feast,

In the quiet home of Bethany, Jesus prepared to face the climactic ordeal of His earthly life.
By CHRISTIAN DALSGAARD

when the fourteenth of Nisan fell on a Friday. In such circumstances the Sadducean temple authorities followed the normal practice of killing the lambs on that day, about the time of the evening sacrifice, and eating the Passover meal on Friday evening. The more conservative Pharisees, on the other hand, put the feast back to the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, that is Thursday evening, which involved having the meal ready as the sun began to decline on the thirteenth. It is thought that the Galileans followed the custom of the Pharisees, in this respect, and so Jesus was able to eat the last Passover meal with His disciples on the evening of the fourteenth of Nisan, while His death on the cross as the "Lamb of God" coincided with the official slaying of the Passover lambs, and His resurrection, early on Sunday the sixteenth of Nisan, synchronized with the offering of the wave sheaf on the day after the first Sabbath of the feast.

As Jesus had not been into Jerusalem since Tuesday, the disciples may have thought that He intended to keep the feast in Bethany, which for the purpose of the Passover was regarded as within the city limits, but in order that antitype might meet type perfectly, Jesus had decided that He would eat it with His disciples in Jerusalem itself. When, therefore, the disciples approached Him, He selected two of them, probably Peter and John, and said, "Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with My disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us."

It was the custom of the people of Jerusalem at Passover time to open their homes freely to visiting Jews for the celebration of the feast, and so there must have been many Galilean groups seeking similar hospitality that morning as Peter and John entered the city.

The disciples, however, did not have to make any inquiries, for no sooner were they inside the gate than they saw a man coming from one of the pools of Jerusalem, not with a water skin slung by a strap over his shoulder, but with a water pot such as was more commonly borne by women. The man was so conspicuous that Peter and John had no difficulty in picking him out and, as Jesus bade them, they followed him along the street. When he reached his destination, the disciples went in and spoke to the owner of the house as they were bidden. At once the man led them to the guest room of his house, where preliminary preparations for the Passover had already been made. In the centre of the carefully swept floor was a low table, and around it on three sides were divans amply spread with cushions, for in the time of Christ the Passover was no longer eaten standing and in haste as when Israel left Egypt. Carpets surrounded the couches and clay lamps had been arranged in a central candelabra to illuminate the room.

The man may have prepared the room with the intention of extending hospitality to the first callers, but the fact that he invited the disciples in as soon as they mentioned "the Master" suggests that he was himself a disciple. It could even be that a prior arrangement had been made by Jesus, including the plan by which the disciples would be led to his house. This secrecy may have been necessary in order to prevent Judas, the betrayer, telling the priests where they could find Him. This last supper was to have a deep significance for the disciples, and Jesus had much to say to them. It was essential, therefore, that they should be undisturbed.

The Bible does not give any indication where the House of the Last Supper was, but tradition has placed it on the hill of Zion in the south-west corner of the city. A church was built on the site in the fourth century which, after destruction by the Persians, was rebuilt by the Crusader, Geoffrey de Bouillon, much as it is today. The lower storey is now a mosque, claimed by the Moslems to be the tomb of David, but from the mosque twenty steps lead to an upper chamber of considerable size, with a vaulted roof supported by two central columns symbolically decorated with grapes and wheat ears. Some think that the original house was that of the parents of John Mark, which after the crucifixion provided a retreat for the disciples and the venue of the first church in Jerusalem. If so, the present building marks the site of "the mother church of Christendom."

Be that as it may, the disciples, after thanking their kind host for his hospitality, immediately set about assembling the food and utensils for the feast.

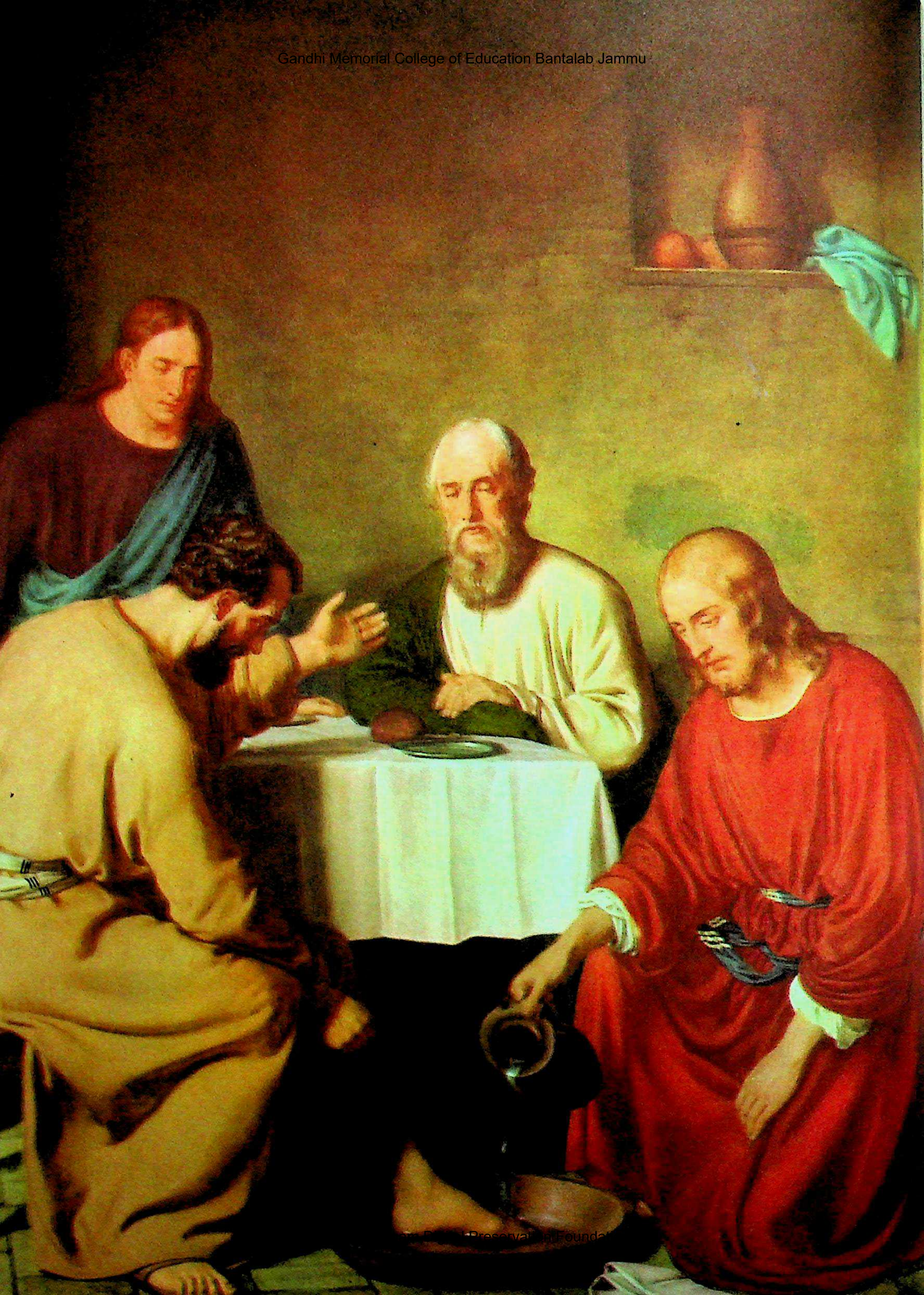
Residents in Jerusalem would probably have bought their lambs, unblemished animals of the first year, on the tenth day of the month, as the law of Moses commanded, but as it was impossible for those who came from a distance to bring their lambs with them, they were permitted to purchase them in Jerusalem any time up to the day before the feast. The obtaining of a lamb would thus be the disciples' first task.

Besides the lamb, a special bitter red sauce called charoseth, made of dried almonds, dates, figs, raisins, spices, and vinegar, had to be prepared; bitter herbs such as majoram, bay, and thyme were obtained to represent the "bread of affliction" which Israel experienced in captivity; and unleavened bread, to signify the putting away of the leaven of sin, had to be made or bought. The exact number of cups for the company who were to celebrate were placed in readiness, together with wine and water enough for the meal, and a large water jar and bowls were set by the wall for the ablutions on arrival and during the meal.

In the late afternoon, "between the evenings," the lamb was taken to the temple to be slain and then brought back and roasted whole on a spit over an open fire, care being taken that no bones were broken in the cooking.

When all had been arranged, the owner of the house was left in charge, and the disciples returned to Bethany to report that everything was ready for the feast.

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:17-19; Mark 14:12-16; Luke 22:7-13.



CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

A Lesson in Humility

HAVING received word from Peter and John that all was ready for the celebration of the Passover, Jesus waited until it was growing dusk to avoid observation, and then set off with His disciples for Jerusalem. It was dark when they entered the upper room which had been placed at their disposal.

Water and foot bowls had been set by the wall for the washing of the feet of the guests after their dusty walk from Bethany, but as no servant was at hand to perform this task, and none of the disciples offered to serve his brethren, they took their places round the table without washing. Jesus was grieved at this manifestation of pride in the hearts of the disciples. He saw that their thoughts were still upon the positions which they would occupy in the kingdom of the Messiah—which they still mistakenly believed to be near—rather than upon the service and sacrifice to which He had called them. To have humbled themselves to perform the menial task of washing their fellow-disciples' feet, they felt would have prejudiced their chances of elevation in the kingdom. And so, as on many previous occasions, this last momentous gathering was marred by an undercurrent of tension and strife.

Jesus did not immediately comment on it. He allowed John to take his usual place on His right hand, with Peter next to him, while Judas ostentatiously placed himself on Jesus' left. When the disciples were all settled, each reclining on his left elbow, Jesus spoke to them. "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

Up to this time Jesus had partaken of three Passover meals with His disciples, though not all had been present at the first two, as these were before the ordination of the twelve. This Passover, however, was to be the most fateful of all, for it was actually to climax the long succession of Passovers since Israel left Egypt.

The disciples were amazed and shamed at the condescension of Jesus as He stooped to wash their feet.
By J. ROED

This was the "hour" to which all Jesus' earthly ministry had been directed, for on the morrow type and antitype would meet in His suffering and death, His work on earth would be finished, and He would "depart out of this world unto the Father" to take up the next phase of His ministry as Mediator on behalf of sinners.

But though Jesus had looked forward to this final occasion of fellowship with His disciples, His heart was heavy with sorrow because He knew that they were far from ready to stand alone when His bodily presence should be taken from them. One of them was treacherously to betray Him, and the rest, in the last crisis, would flee for their lives, leaving Him to face alone the anguish of the cross. Yet "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end," and sought to prepare them for their own dread ordeal by His last loving counsels.

The Passover meal began in the usual manner, though the Bible record does not detail the first part of the service. Jesus, as head of the house, after giving thanks for the occasion, pronounced a blessing upon the wine, using the customary words, "Blessed be Thou, God, King of the universe, who createst the fruit of the vine." He then passed a first cup around to each of the disciples.

This introduction to the meal was normally followed by the washing of the hands by all present. It may, therefore, have been at this point that Jesus decided to repair the omission before they came to the table, and teach the disciples a profound lesson. This is supported by the statement in John's account of the evening, "And supper being begun (lit.) . . . He riseth from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself." Then, pouring water into one of the copper basins provided, He knelt down and began to wash the feet of the disciples, wiping them with the towel at His waist.

Amazed and shamed by the condescension of Jesus, the disciples accepted the service in silence until He reached Peter. When Jesus placed the bowl in front of him, Peter could contain his feelings no longer. "Lord, dost Thou wash my feet?" he cried incredulously.

"What I do thou knowest not now," Jesus answered, taking Peter's feet in His gentle grasp; "but thou shalt know hereafter."

"Thou shalt never wash my feet," Peter burst out impulsively, drawing his foot away. "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me," Jesus answered quietly.

Peter was sobered by the warning. Although he still could not understand why Jesus should insist on washing his feet, the thought of being separated from Him affected him profoundly. "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head," he said. But this was not necessary nor appropriate to teach the lesson Jesus intended. "He that is washed [lit., had a bath]," He replied, "needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit."

By this Jesus meant that just as a person who had bathed his whole body in preparation for the feast was clean except for the dust of the journey upon his feet, so those who had committed their lives to Him needed only to be kept clean in heart by the purging away of every fleeting thought of sin before it had time to fix itself in the heart. And without a doubt, the symbolic service did accomplish this desirable end for the repentant disciples.

"Know ye what I have done to you?" Jesus asked as the chastened disciples resumed their seats at the table. "Ye call Me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. . . . If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

It is indeed a pity that most Christian churches have forgotten this clear injunction, and no longer celebrate the beautiful ordinance Jesus instituted as a preliminary to the communion service; for it could be as efficacious today in breaking down pride, cultivating humility, and intensifying the spirit of fellowship in the church as in that upper room in Jerusalem long ago. It is traditionally remembered once a year on Maundy Thursday in the Catholic church when the Pope washes the feet of twelve poor men in the Sistine Chapel, and a similar practice is followed in some Eastern churches. There are also a few Protestant churches in which the ordinance of feet-washing is still regularly celebrated as an essential preliminary to the communion service, with the consequent blessing to the participants as Jesus promised.

Having taught His beloved disciples this much-needed lesson in humility, Jesus had a wonderful word of encouragement for them. "I appoint unto you a kingdom," He said, "as My Father hath appointed unto Me." If they would follow Him in service and sacrifice, a glorious reward would one day be theirs. If they drank now of His cup, they would "eat and drink" at His "table" in His kingdom. If they humbled themselves in service now, they would in due time be exalted to sit with Him "on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

Perhaps it was because Jesus saw the glint in the eyes of Judas at the mention of the kingdom that He added, "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen." As Jesus looked at His disciples He knew who were His, and He knew who was not. Judas had ambitiously secured a place for himself in the disciple band, but from the beginning he was never really one of them. And soon he would be separated from them for ever.

The lesson of this solemn service must not be lost upon us, for only those who learn the lesson of humility will be exalted in the kingdom of God. "Before honour," said Solomon, "is humility." "The meek," said Jesus, "shall inherit the earth."

This chapter is based on Luke 22:14-16, 24-30; John 13:1-20; Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17, 18.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

At the Lord's Table

WHEN the disciples had resumed their places at table after the vivid lesson on humility which Jesus had given them, the main part of the Passover meal began. Before them were spread the roasted lamb, the savoury charoseth sauce, the unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. As head of the house, Jesus first dipped some bitter herbs into the sauce, ate them, and then distributed portions to all. A second cup of wine was next served, and when the youngest of the disciples, most likely John, asked the traditional question as to the significance of the Passover, Jesus explained its meaning. Wonderful must have been Jesus' discourse on this momentous occasion.

A Hallel, or hymn of praise, consisting of Psalms 113 and 114 was then sung, and a blessing pronounced upon the bread, Jesus doubtless using the customary words, "Blessed be Thou God, King of the whole world, who bringest forth bread out of the earth." Then, dipping a piece into the sauce, He partook of it. The disciples followed suit, helping themselves also to pieces of meat from the common dish.

It was "as they were eating" that Jesus interrupted once more the normal course of the meal to institute what was to be the counterpart of the Passover throughout the future history of the Christian church. After His death on the morrow there would be no further need for blood sacrifices. At the cross, type would meet and be superseded by antitype. Never again would they need to kill an animal to symbolize the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," for the memory of the cross would ever be with them. The bitter herbs, too, would cease to have their former significance, for the sacrifice of Calvary would for ever turn their mourning into joy. So, with the emblems of the bread and wine which remained, Jesus inaugurated the church's new service of commemoration.

Judas rose from the table and went out into the night.
By CARL BLOCH

Taking a piece of unleavened bread, He raised it in His hands toward heaven, and pronounced a blessing upon it. Then, breaking it in His hands, to represent the bruising and piercing of His body on the cross, He distributed the fragments to each of the disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you." Appropriate indeed was the word "given" for God had literally given His Son, and Jesus was about to give Himself for sinners by His vicarious sacrifice.

When the disciples had partaken of the emblem of His broken body which was to be "given" for them, Jesus took a cup of wine and, after pronouncing a special benediction upon it, He passed it in turn to each of the disciples, saying, "Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." This corresponded with the third cup of the regular Passover meal, which was traditionally called the "cup of blessing." Paul recognized the even greater appropriateness of the title in connection with the new service of commemoration, and of it wrote, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?"

Finally, to indicate His purpose in giving this new ordinance to His disciples at this time, Jesus added, "This do in remembrance of Me." Until now the Passover service had kept in continual remembrance the deliverance of Israel from bondage in Egypt. The celebration of the Lord's supper would from now on keep in continual remembrance the ultimate deliverance of God's people from the bondage of sin through the cross.

If this clear instruction had always been kept in mind, the church would have been spared a number of sad errors which, down the centuries, have obscured the significance of the ordinance in some sections of the Christian church.

At the one extreme, it is claimed that when the priest in the Roman Catholic mass consecrates the bread and the wine, it is miraculously changed into the actual body and blood of Christ which is offered to God in an ever-repeated sacrifice, and of which the communicants literally partake. This is entirely at variance with Christ's words and intention, and has led to the idolatrous practice of the veneration of the "real presence" of Christ in the "host."

In rebuttal of this claim, it should be pointed out that in the Hebrew, Chaldee, Syriac, and cognate languages there was no word for "signify," as in Greek and Latin, so that to express this meaning the verb "to be" had to be used. Thus when Jesus in His parables made such statements as "The field is the world," He meant, "The field represents the world." Paul used the same idiom when he said, "The Rock was [represented] Christ," and so did John the Revelator, when he wrote, "The seven stars are [represent] seven angels." When, therefore, Jesus gave pieces of unleavened bread to the disciples, saying, "This is My body," He did not mean that He had made it into His actual body, for He stood there whole before them. He meant, according to the common usage of such a phrase, "This represents My body," and He intended that the service of the "breaking of bread" would be a continuing reminder to the church of His sacrifice, At the other extreme, reformers like George Fox and the Quakers, in their anxiety not to degrade spiritual truths, went so far as to discard the ordinance altogether. This, too, is wrong, for though the Bible teaching concerning these visible emblems may have been falsified by apostasy, the fact that they are definitely commanded by the Lord indicates that they have an important spiritual purpose, which we lose by failing to avail ourselves of them.

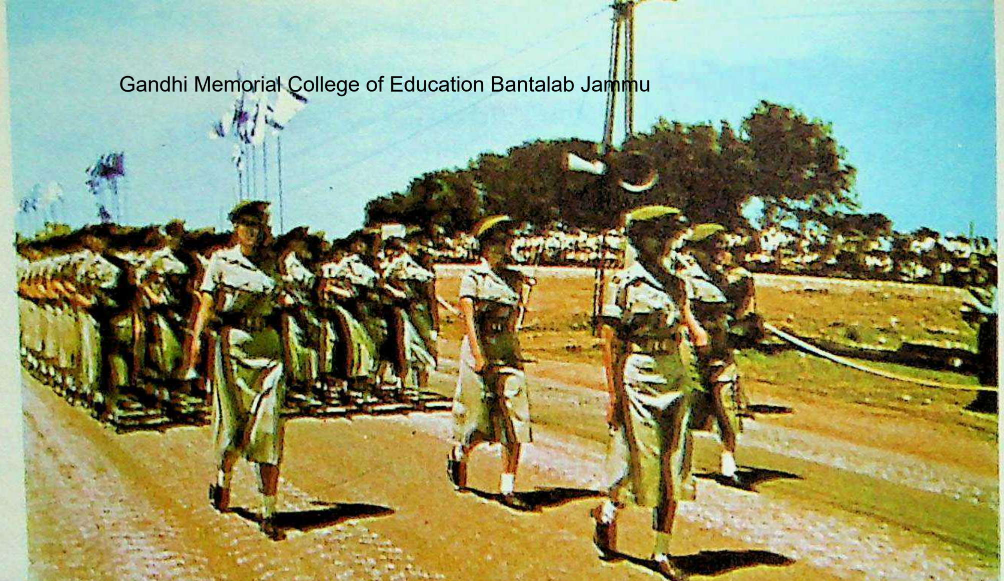
In the Lord's supper there is a real "spiritual" presence of Christ, which is received by those who partake worthily of the consecrated elements. As the "Westminster Confession" puts it: "The body and blood of Christ are as really but spiritually present to the faith of believers in the ordinance as the elements themselves are to the outward senses." The service is more than a memorial, it is a definite means of grace; but the grace is not contained in the material emblems, it comes through the faith expressed in the reverent act of remembrance.

As we partake of the sacred emblems we are reminded that, through the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord, we have "remission of sins." In the papyri the word "remission" was used for the release of a debtor from punishment, and Christ's sacrifice did indeed vicariously release man from the punishment due to him for his sin. The sacrifice of Christ could have secured remission for the sins of all the world, but actually it will avail only for those who are prepared by faith to accept its merits.

Besides symbolizing the justifying of the sinner through the merits of Christ's sacrifice, the ordinance Jesus instituted also vividly set forth the impartation of righteousness through the sharing of His life. As the disciples ate of the bread and drank of the wine, they symbolized the reception of the perfect holiness of His divine nature. As Jesus said on a previous occasion, "He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. . . . He that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." Just as the Israelites gained strength for their journey from the Passover meal, so we gain strength for the journey of life through partaking of the life of Christ typified by the bread and wine of the communion service.

Still further, the Lord's supper looked forward to Christ's final triumph, for after giving the wine to the disciples, Jesus added, "I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

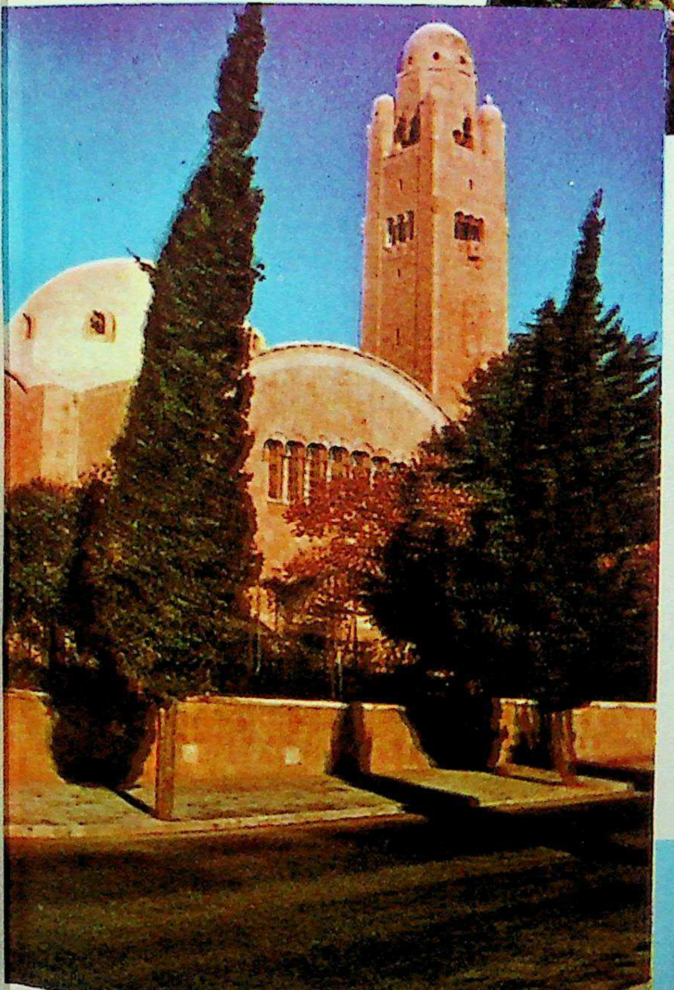
On more than one occasion after His resurrection, Jesus partook with the disciples in common meals, but He did not again partake of the "fruit of the vine." When the great day of the marriage feast of the Lamb comes, however, He will sit at the head of the table in the kingdom with all His redeemed around Him and drink with them of the "new" wine of triumph and victory. Paul therefore reminded the believers that every time they partook of the sacred emblems, they showed "the Lord's death till He come." Thus the service was to keep bright both the memory of the past and the hope of the future.



ABOVE
Jewish girl soldiers marching in an Independence Day parade in modern Israel.

LEFT
Flags of the twelve tribes flying in Israeli Jerusalem.

BELOW
Towering above the streets of Jewish Jerusalem is the beautiful Y.M.C.A. building.



ABOVE
At Easter-time the cross is borne in procession through the streets of Jerusalem, as Jesus once carried it to Calvary.

BELOW
Ben Jehuda Street, one of the fine modern thoroughfares of Israeli Jerusalem.

LEFT
A picturesque procession of Jewish children featuring the Ten Commandments.

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Besides commemorating the blessings which are ours in Christ, the communion service was still further to manifest the fellowship of all believers with one another around the table of the Lord, and in the "household of God."

Of course, the disciples did not at the time fully comprehend all that this symbolic service was to mean to the Christian church, but all were deeply affected by the words Jesus had spoken; that is, all save Judas. The fact that Judas was permitted to partake of the sacred emblems is, however, significant. There are those who assert that only professing and baptized believers can come to the table of the Lord. But Jesus set no such barriers to His table. If Judas the betrayer was allowed to partake of the sacred emblems when his heart was set to betray his Master, surely no church has the right to exclude from the table any who wish to come. The invitation is extended to all, but the blessing of the service is received only by those who desire to receive the spiritual gifts of which the emblems are a symbol.

To partake "worthily," however, does not mean that one must feel "worthy." We may come to the table of the Lord as conscious of our sins and weaknesses as the disciples themselves were, but if we sincerely desire the imputed righteousness of Christ to cleanse us from sin, and the imparted righteousness of Christ to enable us to do His will in all things, we will receive a blessing.

On the other hand, if we come, like Judas, unworthy in heart to the table of the Lord, we not merely lose the blessing, but incur God's curse, for instead of "discerning the Lord's body" in the sacred emblems, we "crucify Him afresh." No wonder, therefore, that the apostle Paul solemnly admonishes, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat."

When Jesus saw that His solemn words had made no impression upon Judas, and that the betrayer was still bent upon his evil purpose, He knew that the time had come for the final separation. So as the meal proceeded, Jesus said plainly to His disciples, "I know whom I have chosen: but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, . . . I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me. . . . Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth Me is with Me on the table."

The words came as a shock to the disciples "and they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing." It speaks well, however, for the new spirit which had come to them through the ordinance of humility that, instead of suspecting one another, they each began to ask Jesus, "Lord, is it I?" except Judas, whose silence the disciples did not notice amid their own personal apprehensions.

At last Peter leaned over to John as he reclined on Jesus' breast and whispered to him to ask Jesus who the betrayer would be. In an aside to John, Jesus replied, "He it is, to whom I shall give a sop [or morsel], when I have dipped it."

It was a common practice at a feast for the host to dip a piece of bread into the common dish and hand it to an honoured guest. By using this act as a means of identification, Jesus offered to Judas a last evidence of His love, and at the same time indicated, as prophecy had declared, that the betrayer would be a "familiar friend" in whom He had "trusted," who had eaten of His bread, yet who was now about to "lift up his heel" against Him even as Ahithophel betrayed David.

As Jesus talked quietly to John, Judas sensed that he was the subject of conversation and, in an effort to cover up his intended treachery, he said sanctimoniously to Jesus, "Rabbi, is it I?" He was taken aback when Jesus, dipping a piece of bread into the charoseth sauce "gave it" to him and said, "Thou hast said."

Up to this time there had always been the possibility that Judas might have repented of the ultimate crime he purposed to commit, but now the die was cast. The break between himself and Jesus was complete. Now "Satan entered into him" and took complete control of his actions till his death.

None of the disciples except Peter had caught the words of Jesus to John, or understood the meaning of the giving of the sop, and so when Jesus said audibly to Judas, "That thou doest, do quickly," they imagined He referred to some errand that the disciple needed to perform as "keeper of the purse," such as buying food for the rest of the feast, or making some contribution to the poor during the Passover season. Only Peter and John realized, when Judas got up and went out, that he was going straight to the priests to arrange how they might take Jesus.

"It was night," the Record says when Judas departed, and it was not merely the physical darkness which enveloped him. Judas went out from the presence of "the light of the world" into the kingdom of darkness from which he was never to return.

When Judas first sought a place among the disciples, Jesus gave him his opportunity. All through the years they had been together He tried to win his love. If Judas had gained the victory over his pride and ambition he could have been a monument of grace. Instead, he allowed the sin in his heart to develop until no recovery was possible.

"The Son of man goeth [to His death] as it is written of Him," Jesus said to His disciples when Judas had gone out, "but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had never been born." It was necessary for the Scripture to be fulfilled because the death of Jesus was by "the determinate counsel" of God for the redemption of lost mankind, but Judas was not himself predestined to be the betrayer. It was of his own free will that he had allowed Satan to use him as the tool of his evil design. And in so doing he turned his back upon God's purpose for his life. Rejecting eternal gain, he condemned himself to eternal loss.

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:21-29; John 13:21-30; Mark 14:18-25; Luke 22:17-23.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

The Coming of the Comforter

ON the night of the first Passover in Egypt the Israelites were instructed for their safety not to leave their houses until the morning. This was no longer obligatory in the time of Jesus, but it was customary to stay and talk for some time. So as Jesus sat at the table with His disciples, He used the opportunity to explain the new relationship He would have with His people after His ascension to heaven.

Rousing the disciples from the deep gloom which had settled upon them by the announcement of His imminent betrayal and death, Jesus first sought to carry their minds forward to its glorious outcome. "Now," He declared, "is the Son of man glorified, and God is glorified in Him."

To the unbelieving who would see Jesus die on the cross, it would seem to mark the depths of His humiliation and defeat, but for Jesus it would be the supreme manifestation of the glory He had come to reveal. On Calvary would be displayed to the world, and before a watching universe, the supreme glory of God's holiness and of His love. And though the last the world would see of Him would be when His lifeless body was sealed in the tomb, He knew that from its depths He would come forth to resume the "glory" which had been His from all eternity with the Father, and that one day in "His own glory, and in His Father's and of the holy angels" He would return in triumph.

To that day Jesus now directed the minds of His disciples. "Little children," He said endearingly, "yet a little while I am with you." Soon "ye shall seek Me," but ye will not find Me, for "whither I go, ye cannot come."

"Lord, whither goest Thou?" Peter asked in perplexity.

"Whither I go," Jesus went on, seemingly heedless of the interruption, "thou canst not follow Me now; but thou shalt follow Me afterwards."

"Lord, why cannot I follow Thee now?" Peter persisted, and, thinking that

Jesus was referring to some new danger into which He was going, he added impulsively, "I will lay down my life for Thy sake."

Then Jesus in plain language opened to the minds of His disciples the divine programme from the time of His ascension to the time when they would have the joyous privilege of following Him to His heavenly home.

"Let not your heart be troubled," about being parted for a time, "ye believe in God, believe also in Me." If you trust God, He said in effect, you can trust Me to work out all things for your good.

"In My Father's house," He went on, "are many mansions: . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Following His resurrection, Jesus declared, He would return to His Father in heaven, there to minister the merits of His blood on behalf of those who claimed His grace, and at the same time He would be preparing the heavenly mansions for their reception. They need have no fear that heaven would be too small to accommodate all His people. In the "many" mansions there would be room for all, and their beauty would transcend human imagination. Then, at the time appointed by God, He would personally come back to gather His people to Himself and take them to their heavenly home.

The order of events which Jesus here so clearly set forth should dispose completely of the idea entertained by so many that at death the righteous are translated immediately to heaven. On previous occasions Jesus had stated that death is a "sleep" which will not be broken until the resurrection day. Here He revealed that that day will be when the heavenly "mansions" are ready to receive His people. Paul, in his first epistle to the Thessalonians, vividly describes the events of that momentous day. "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

It may be wondered how this outline of the course of events associated with Christ's return in glory harmonizes with His equally clear declaration in the Sermon on the Mount that the "meek" are destined to "inherit the earth." The answer is in the word which Jesus used for the heavenly "abiding places" of the saints, for this term was used of the caravanserais or inns used by travellers. By it Jesus indicated that heaven would be a temporary stopping place on the road to the kingdom, rather than the permanent home of God's people. In the book of Revelation, John reveals that the period of this sojourn corresponds with the final cleansing of the earth by fire and the restoration of its Edenic beauty. When this work is accomplished, he tells us, the saints will leave their temporary abiding places in heaven to return with Christ to the earth, which will then become the throne of Christ's universal kingdom, and their home for ever.

So Jesus went on in His explanation to His disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

At this point the disciple Thomas, who had always been slow of understanding when Jesus was instructing His disciples, blurted out, "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?" He still thought that the kingdom was soon to be established on the earth, and he just could not understand what Jesus had been saying about going away and coming back. Patiently Jesus replied, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him."

In other words, "If you find it difficult to understand what I have said about the way to heaven, you need not worry if you realize that I am not only showing you the way, but I am the Way. If you join yourself to Me, you will be linked with heaven and I will bring you to the Father. In fact, if you know Me, it is as if you were already in the presence of My Father, for in Me is eternal truth and eternal life."

Here Philip, who had been listening to Jesus' explanation to Thomas, broke in, as if to justify his friend's doubts, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." If they could have some spectacular demonstration of God's presence and power, their confidence in the outworking of His purpose would be established.

Turning to Philip in gentle remonstrance, Jesus replied, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself: but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." Surely, He urged, they had had ample demonstration of the power of God in His words and in His works. But if, He continued, they needed yet more evidence, they would have it in abundant measure when He ascended to the presence of His Father in heaven; for as the believers continued the ministry which He had begun, "the works" that He had done, they would do also, and indeed even "greater works" because, He said, "I go to My Father."

By this Jesus did not mean that the works they would do as a result of His return to His Father would be intrinsically greater than those which He had wrought, for no work could be greater than the raising of the dead. He meant that the ministry which He had begun on a very limited geographical scale, and to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel," would be continued on a vastly greater scale of space and time as His disciples carried the Gospel of salvation to the whole world.

The disciples would have further assurance that their ascended Lord was indeed at "the right hand" of His Father in heaven, Jesus went on to explain, because, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." As they came "boldly unto the throne of grace" the boundless resources of heaven would be released to supply their every need.

The channel through which this power for life and witness would come, Jesus declared, would be through the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, to take His place at their side, while Jesus continued His mediatorial ministry in heaven. "I will pray the Father," He said, "and He shall give you another Comforter [lit., One standing beside], that He may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him: but ye [shall] know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."

True, God's Spirit had been in the world since the beginning, for at creation He "moved upon the face of the waters," and He had, through all previous ages, been accessible and efficacious in the lives of men. But after Christ's departure He would, in a special way, be available to His people, literally as "One standing beside" them in all their experiences and service for Him.

The Spirit would "stand beside" them to "comfort" them in all their trials, and inspire them with joy and hope.

He would "stand beside" them as the "Spirit of truth" to recall all that Jesus had taught them, and to lead them into a still deeper understanding of the things of God. In fact, the Spirit would teach them "all things," and lead them into "all truth."

He would "stand beside" them as they prayed, to translate their feeble words into heavenly language and bring their petitions to God's throne.

He would "stand beside" them to empower their witness to men. In fact, the Spirit would be to them all that Jesus had been when He was with them in the flesh. The Spirit would be the new channel of divine grace.

In the light of this wonderful divine plan, declared Jesus, far from being troubled and afraid at the thought of His departure, His disciples should "rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father." As long as He was confined to a human form His activity was limited to the little world of His immediate disciples, but from His place beside His Father in His throne, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, their needs and the needs of all who should believe would be abundantly supplied. And possessed by His peace, they would be preserved untroubled and unafraid until He came back to gather them into His kingdom.

"Hereafter," Jesus concluded, "I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh." But "I have told you [all this] before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe."

Satan might do his worst, but no weapon he had forged against Jesus would prosper. The cross would seal the plan of redemption, and make certain Christ's triumph and Satan's defeat.

This chapter is based on John 13:31-14:31.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

The Vine and the Branches

It was late in the evening when Jesus ended His discourse to His disciples about the coming of the Comforter. At His request they all stood to sing the final Hallel of the Passover meal, comprising Psalms 115 to 118, and went out together into the night.

The most direct way from the suburb of Zion to the Mount of Olives was over the Tyropœan bridge, and through the temple courts, but after dark none but the priests were allowed in the sacred precincts. So Jesus must either have turned north past Herod's palace, the house of the High Priest, and the fortress of Antonia, or else descended the Tyropœan Valley and left by one of the southern gates, then following the upper slope of the Kidron gorge to the Sheep Gate. In either case He and His disciples would go down the street of steps leading from the Sheep Gate to the river. Traces of this road and the one which climbed the Mount of Olives on the other side are to be found less than a hundred yards from the modern bridge.

Most of the year the Kidron was a dry watercourse, but in the spring a torrent filled the river bed for a few weeks. As Jesus crossed by a shallow ford He doubtless recalled that David, His forefather according to the flesh, had gone over the Kidron probably at this very spot after he had been treacherously betrayed by his "familiar friend," Ahithophel.

As the little group began to ascend the steep wooded hill, Jesus looked with compassion at His companions and sorrowfully said, "All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

As usual it was Peter who hastened to assure Jesus of his loyalty. "Though

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Late in the evening, Jesus and His disciples left the upper room to go over Kidron to Gethsemane.
By CHRISTIAN DALSGAARD

all men should be offended because of Thee," he said, "yet will I never be offended." Peter was entirely sincere in his protestations of allegiance, but, as on so many previous occasions, he failed to realize his own frailty. And not until he had had the most severe test of his life did he learn the double lesson of humility and of utter dependence on Christ.

"Verily I say unto you," replied Jesus to Peter's boast, "That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice."

At this Peter protested even more vehemently. "If I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee in any wise," he asserted, forgetting the past occasions when the weakness of the flesh had belied his confident boasts.

"Simon, Simon," said Jesus, the repetition of Peter's name indicating the solemnity of what He was about to say, "Behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." Already Satan had Judas in his clutches, and now he was seeking to wreck the experience of yet another of the disciples. "But," said Jesus, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not."

Though Peter would come near to the shipwreck of his faith through the machinations of Satan, yet in this crisis of his life he would be upheld by the prayers of Jesus. By God's grace he would learn his lesson and rise again.

Confident that Peter would not utterly fall, Jesus said to him, "When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." And out of that heart-breaking experience Peter did indeed gain a strength which enabled him to bring courage and hope to many during his long ministry to the church.

But while Jesus had to warn Peter and the other disciples of the trying hour through which they would all pass, He assured them that He would meet them again before His return to His Father and assign to them their future work for Him. "After I am risen again," He said, "I will go before you unto Galilee."

Very different, however, would they find their work as messengers of the Crucified One from their missionary labours in the heyday of Jesus' popularity. "When I sent you without purse, and scrip, and shoes, lacked ye anything?" Jesus asked. "And they said, Nothing," for everywhere they had been welcomed as the disciples of the Miracle-worker of Galilee. Now, Jesus advised them, "He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one." While some would still receive them gladly, they would also encounter hatred and opposition. And for this they must prepare themselves.

There has been much speculation as to what Jesus meant when He said, "And he that hath no sword, let him . . . buy one." Certainly He did not mean that His messengers would ever have to use physical weapons to defend themselves, or to advance the cause of the Gospel. If He had, He would hardly have said, "It is enough," when they told Him they had two swords among the twelve of them!

The "sword" to which Jesus referred was the general purpose knife which Palestinians of those days carried, as the Scots used to carry a dirk in their hose.

It was commonly used for the cutting up of food, and its name *md'akeleth* was actually derived from the word *md'akel,* meaning food. As homes would no longer be readily opened to them in their missionary labours, they would need to carry food, money, and all necessary equipment as they travelled from city to city. Hence His timely counsel.

That Jesus would never tolerate His messengers using material weapons either for offence or defence, He showed shortly after this when He rebuked Peter for drawing his knife against the high priest's servant. Paul said on a later occasion, "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal." The power of the Gospel is the power of love, not coercion. The "quick and powerful" sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, is the only weapon which the messenger of Christ needs for the prosecution of his spiritual warfare.

Following the road up the slope of Olivet, Jesus and His disciples made their way toward a walled garden called Gethsemane where Jesus had often retired for communion with God, and on occasions had rested for the night when He did not wish to return to Bethany.

Its name, which means "olive press," indicates it was an olive grove, though, as was customary, it would contain also some fig trees and vines. It seems likely that the grove belonged to one of Christ's disciples in Jerusalem, and if the upper room where Jesus had celebrated the Passover was in the home of John Mark, what would be more natural than that He should resort to the quiet seclusion of the family garden outside the city to meditate and pray.

Exactly where the Garden of Gethsemane was, it is impossible to say. Actually there are today three Gethsemanes on the slopes of the Mount of Olives, one cared for by the Roman Catholics, another by the Armenians, and still another, higher up the mountain, in the charge of the Russian Orthodox Church. All we can now say is that it was on the lower slopes of Olivet, not far from the Kidron crossing and probably less than half a mile from the city walls.

In the Franciscan garden, which Queen Helena and Constantine the Great in the fourth century believed to be the true Gethsemane, there are among the beautifully laid-out beds of Palestine flowers, eight gnarled old olive trees, twenty-four to thirty feet in circumference, which are certainly many hundreds of years old. One is known as the Tree of the Agony, but it is hardly likely that any of them go back as far as the time of Christ.

As the little band neared the gate into the garden the moon shone down upon a flourishing vine beside the road. Before it Jesus stopped to give His disciples yet another reminder that their strength for living and for service would ever be dependent upon their connection with His omnipotent power through the promised Spirit.

"I am the true Vine," He said, pointing to the tree, "and My Father is the Husbandman. . . . Ye are the branches: he that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing."

The ancient prophets had often compared Israel to the familiar vine, but here Jesus suggested that really He was the Vine and His people were the branches, entirely dependent for their life on their constant connection with the divine stock.

The reason ancient Israel failed to bear fruit, and bore only "wild grapes," was because they had lost their vital connection with Him. At this time the nation was rapidly withering, and soon, like the dead branches of the vine, they would be gathered up for destruction.

To replace the dead wood, the branches of the new Israel were to be grafted in. If these new branches continued to "abide" in Him through the efficacious presence of the Holy Spirit, they would, as Jesus declared in His earlier parable of the vineyard, "bring forth" the good fruit of righteousness. But if, like Israel, they lost their connection with Him, they would become fruitless, and would eventually have to be rejected as ancient Israel had been.

This parable of the Vine and the branches is a parable also of the individual Christian life. In our own strength we can do nothing. Only by constant, daily partaking of the divine nature, can we mature and bear fruit "unto righteousness." As the branches of the vine have no life apart from a living connection with the stock, so we have no life apart from Christ. As the branches are nourished by drawing the vital sap from the trunk of the vine, so we are to draw daily strength by feeding upon God's Word and through a living prayer connection with Him. Thus do we literally become partakers of the divine nature, fortifying our weakness with His strength and our frailty with His enduring might.

Failing to abide, on the other hand, will inevitably result in a withering of our experience and eventual spiritual death. And if we become dead branches we can expect no other fate than to be gathered up in the day of judgment and destroyed. "If a man abide not in Me," declared Jesus solemnly, "he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." But, He added, "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

Moreover, Jesus explained further, just as the fruit-bearing vine is improved and caused to bear more fruit by careful pruning, so through testing and trial, God "purges" our lives that we may bear "more fruit." The pruning process is drastic to the plant, as also do the trials of the Christian life seem to us, but neither are haphazard or careless. Carefully the pruning knife is applied in our experience, and though the process may bring pain, the result will be for our good that we may bring forth "much fruit."

"Herein is My Father glorified," Jesus concluded, "that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples."

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:30-35; Mark 14:27-31; Luke 22:31-38; John 15:1-8.

CHAPTER THIRTY

Power for the Task

FROM the language of parable Jesus had used as He stood with His disciples before the spreading vine near the entrance to the Garden of Gethsemane, He reverted to plain speech as He talked further of the fruitage which He looked to see in their lives as a result of their union with Him.

"As the Father hath loved Me," said Jesus, "so have I loved you: continue ye in My love." Then He added, "This is My commandment, That ye love one another as I have loved you."

In His earlier discourse in the upper room, Jesus had designated this command to love one another as a "new" commandment. By this Jesus did not, of course, mean that it had never been given before. It actually went back to the original law given to Israel at Sinai. It was new, however, in the sense that whereas the pattern of love suggested by the old law was, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," now they were to take as their model the love that God had manifested to His Son, and which Jesus had shown to them. It was this divine love, patient, forbearing, self-sacrificing, love to the uttermost, which was to be reproduced in them as an evidence of their abiding union with Christ.

Defining the measure of His love for His disciples, Jesus went on, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This was what Jesus was about to do for them. He expected, therefore, that they would be willing, if need be, to lay down their lives in His cause. And this too, they did, for according to tradition, all but one of the apostles died a martyr's death, and through the centuries in many lands the blood of countless martyrs has been "the seed of the church."

In another way also the union between Christ and His followers would manifest itself. Because I "abide in His love," Jesus said, "I have kept My Father's commandments." In like manner if you "abide in My love," you will "keep My commandments." In other words, love to Christ and obedience to His commandments would be the sure fruitage of abiding in Him.

What are the commandments to which Christ's followers will render implicit obedience as a result of their love for Him? Because Jesus spoke, on several occasions, of "new" commandments, some have supposed that they must be different from those which God gave to Israel of old, and this has given rise to the idea that the Ten Commandments or Decalogue have been done away in Christ. But this is quite unjustified.

We have seen that the commandment to "love" was new only in the sense that, in the life of Jesus, the disciples had seen a new and unique demonstration of it, and that through the Spirit they were to receive a new power for its achievement. In the same way, all Christ's other commandments were the old commandments of the moral law writ large in His life. He was the Giver of God's commandments at Sinai, and when He came in the flesh He "magnified" this law by exemplifying it in His life. So, He declared, His disciples would show their love for Him by fulfilling His Father's and His commandments in their lives by the new power of the Spirit made available to them by His grace.

In this new love, coupled with this new obedience, His followers would enter into a new relationship with Him. They would no longer be merely dutiful servants of God, but His "friends." The difference between a servant and a friend is that a servant knows nothing of his master's plans, and his obedience is based on fear of punishment if he transgresses. When, however, a servant is taken into the confidence of his master, his service thereafter is a higher service, because it is from love and devotion and not from fear. Such would be the new relationship of Jesus with His disciples through the Spirit. "All things that I have heard of My Father I have made known to you." And after His departure He would continue to reveal His further plans to them through the Spirit, in order that they might co-operate with Him to the full in the outworking of His purposes of grace.

In this new relationship with the Father and with Him, His followers would find their greatest happiness. "These things," said Jesus, "have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." Love would make obedience a joy and lighten every burden borne for Him. The peace which Jesus gives is such as the world cannot give and the joy He imparts is not the transient pleasure of the world which so often ends in sorrow and pain, but the abiding joy of fellowship with Him which none can take away.

At the same time, Jesus warned His disciples that their union with Him would inevitably bring upon them the enmity of Satan and the world. The world hated Christ because His holiness had exposed their sin. In the same way the witness of the church would arouse the hatred of the world, because the church would be a continuing witness against a sinful world. "If the world hate you," Jesus said, "ye know that it hated Me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; . . . these things will they do unto you for My name's sake, because they know not Him that sent Me."

As Jesus saw the foreboding and distress which the recital of their coming trials and tribulations aroused in His disciples, He sought once again to assure them that all that would come upon them would ultimately work for their best good, and for the triumph of His cause.

Concluding His heart-to-heart talk with His disciples, Jesus encouraged them once more with the certainty of His return. "A little while," He said, "and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father."

Still failing, however, to realize that Jesus was soon to leave them, the disciples began to say among themselves, "What is this that He saith to us, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me: and, Because I go to the Father?"

Hearing their discussion Jesus put it to them in another way. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice." When Jesus passed from the eyes of the world, the conscience of sinners would be eased in the belief that they had silenced Jesus; while those who had been blessed by His presence would sorrow that He was no longer with them. But the complacency of the world would one day be shattered and the sorrow of the disciples would be turned to joy.

"A woman," explained Jesus, "when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." So would it be with them. For a time they would be sorrowful that He had gone from them. "But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you." His resurrection on the third day, and His repeated appearances to them prior to His ascension, would be an assurance to them and to the church of final victory.

Finally, gathering up the whole history of the incarnation in a sentence, Jesus concluded, "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father."

From the realms of light and glory Jesus had come down into the dark world of sin to suffer and to die to redeem men. When His mission was completed, He would return to His Father to plead the merits of His life and death on behalf of all who would claim them. Through His incarnation the reconciliation of a lost world to God had been made possible.

This chapter is based on John 15:9-16:33.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

Christ's Last Prayer

AS Jesus ended His discourse on the witness His disciples were to give to the world, He "lifted up His eyes to heaven" and prayed the wonderful prayer recorded for us in the seventeenth chapter of John's gospel. In it Jesus first committed Himself to His Father's will in preparation for the final act in the plan of redemption. Then He prayed for His disciples and the work which He was passing on to them. Finally He prayed for all who would believe in Him through their ministry to the end of time. It is the longest and certainly the most momentous of all the recorded prayers of Jesus.

"Father," He began, "the hour is come." On earlier occasions Jesus had said, "Mine hour is not yet come." But now the climactic hour to which the purpose of God had been moving since the entrance of sin into the world was upon Him.

"Glorify Thy Son," He went on, "that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." To His enemies the cross would mark the depths of His humiliation and shame, but to Jesus it would be a cross of glory, for upon it He would reveal supremely the glory of God's holiness and the glory of His love.

Reporting to His Father the imminent completion of His redemptive mission, He went on, "I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." So now He asks to return to His former glory in heaven with His Father. "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."

At His incarnation Jesus willingly left His glorious home in heaven and took upon Himself a humble human form in order that He might reveal the love of God to men and reconcile men to God. On the cross He would consummate that revelation and finish the work He had come to earth to do. Now He looked forward

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Penetrating deep into the silence of the garden, Jesus fell to the earth in earnest prayer to His Father. By ANTON DORPH to His return to the heavenly courts and the resumption of the glory which He had had eternally with the Father.

Lowering His eyes for a moment to look with love upon the disciple group around Him, he spoke again to His Father. "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me; and they have kept Thy Word."

While the great majority of the Jews failed to recognize His true nature, these His disciples had come to "know" Him as God's Son from heaven, and had entered into fellowship with Him and with His Father.

So, went on Jesus, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; for they are Thine." By this, of course, Jesus did not mean that He had ceased to love the world which had rejected Him; but that His first thought, in this crisis hour, was for those for whom His ministry had been efficacious. "All Mine are Thine, and Thine are Mine," He said; "and I am glorified in them."

"While I was with them in the world," Jesus told His Father, "I kept them in Thy name: those that Thou gavest Me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled." The keeping power of Jesus could have kept Judas too had he chosen to stay close to the Master's side. But because he strayed onto the enemy's ground he fell into the hands of Satan, and was swept to perdition.

Now Jesus could no longer stay beside His faithful disciples, He was concerned for their safety, and besought His Father's aid on their behalf. "I am no more in the world but these are in the world, and I am come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me."

Jesus did not pray that His disciples would be kept from suffering, or even death. He had indeed told them that in the world they would have tribulation. Rather did He pray, with the lesson of Judas in mind, that they would be kept from sin and loss through the powerful Name of God.

Not only did Jesus pray that each of His followers might be kept individually by the power of God, but also that they might be held together in the bonds of unity until He should come again to gather them to Himself. His desire for His church was that they might always be "one, as We are one."

Their lot, He knew, would not be easy. "I have given them Thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." Nevertheless He prayed that the "joy" of His presence and power might never fail in their lives.

While He was sorry to be parted from them, He knew that they must remain to continue the work He had begun, and so He besought His Father, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." To this end He prayed that the truth of God might enfold them as a garment and preserve them from all the contaminating influences of the world. "Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy Word is truth."

Thus protected by the Word and empowered by His Spirit, He was confident that He could send them forth to finish the work which He had begun. "As Thou hast sent Me into the world," He said to His Father, "even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth." His own self-dedication to the task God had given Him would ever be an Example to His people. But more than that, the power of the cross would separate them from sin to holiness and to His service.

Next Jesus prayed for all who would believe through the ministry of His disciples. "Neither pray I for these alone," He said, "but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word." For all believers His desire was "that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

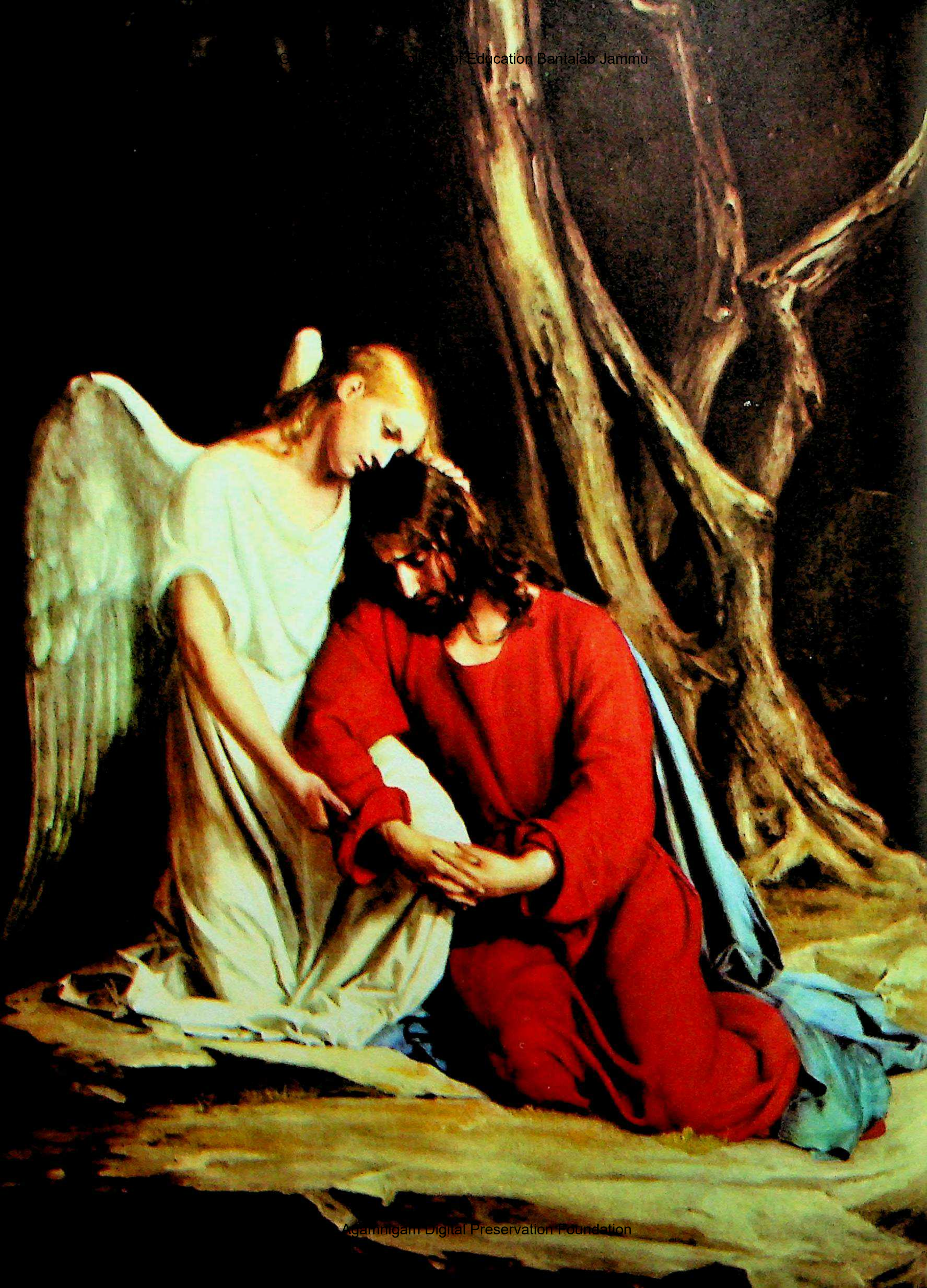
Jesus knew that the church would face dangers by attack from without and divisions from within, and that those who were not truly His would fall away from the church, but He prayed that those who were truly His might be kept in the unity of the faith and that through their united witness many others might be led to believe. "The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me."

In thus praying for the unity of the church, Jesus foresaw and forewarned against the divisive factors which would come in to break its unity. He saw that, even before the disciples passed away, "grievous wolves" would enter into the church to divide and destroy it, and beyond the days of the first disciples He saw the rise of the great apostasy, which would blaspheme His name before the world as Israel had blasphemed God before the nations. But He prayed that, in face of all the divisive influences which would be brought to bear upon the church, His true people might be drawn ever more closely together by His truth, that when He returned they would be waiting and ready to be gathered to Him.

Then, finally, looking forward to the time when His work of redemption would be consummated, Jesus prayed for the eternal union of the church with Himself. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." He looked to the culmination of the age-long plan of redemption when the glory lost at the fall would be fully restored. Long had the controversy raged between God's righteousness and the rebellion of sin. It would end with the victory of the "righteous Father," and holiness and love would be re-established for ever in the universe of God.

For that glorious day Jesus prayed, and we may echo His prayer as we daily from our hearts send up to heaven the petition, "Thy kingdom come."

This chapter is based on John 17:1-26.



CHAPTER
THIRTY-TWO

Agony in Gethsemane

WHEN Jesus had ended His prayer for His disciples and Himself, they continued up the road and, reaching the entrance to the garden, they went in. Just inside Jesus bade His disciples sit down to rest, while He took His three closest companions, Peter, James, and John, with Him into the recesses of the grove. "Sit ye here," He said, "while I go and pray yonder." Jesus had chosen these three disciples to witness the raising of Jairus's daughter. They had been with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration, and now He desired the comfort of their presence in His hour of greatest need.

Penetrating deep into the silence of the garden, Jesus halted beneath one of the trees and, turning to His disciples, He said, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me." As they looked into His face they saw an anguish of spirit such as they had never before beheld. But though they could not begin to enter into the agony of soul which was settling upon Him, Jesus felt the need of their nearness and sympathy in this hour of decision.

Leaving them, Jesus moved on into the gloom, and about a stone's throw away He fell upon the greensward in earnest prayer. As the disciples watched in silent awe they saw Him raise Himself from the ground, and the light of the full moon shone through a gap in the trees upon His upturned face. Resisting the exhaustion which was coming overwhelmingly upon them, they listened as Jesus talked with His Father.

"Father," they heard Him say, "if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." Strange words these might seem upon the lips of One who had come down from heaven expressly to give His life a ransom for sin, and who so many times during

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From heaven God sent an angel to comfort and strengthen Jesus after His agony in the garden.
By CARL BLOCH

His ministry had referred to His vicarious sacrifice. Why then, at this moment of supreme decision, should He ask His Father if there was any way whereby the bitter cup of suffering might be taken from His lips?

We may be certain that the words did not indicate any shrinking from the ignominy of the cross, or from the agony of pain and torture which He knew it involved. Nor do the words suggest any weakening of His resolve to fulfil the purpose of His advent. Rather do they reveal the complete humanity as well as the deity of the Son of man.

Fully man, the sinless Jesus experienced, in all its terrible intensity, the physical and mental anguish of the doomed sinner. As the prophet Isaiah foretold, God had "numbered" Him with the transgressors. He had laid on Him "the iniquity of us all." The sword of justice was unsheathed against Him, and the Innocent One was about to be "smitten" for the sins of a rebellious world.

No wonder then, as the dread weight of the world's sin and guilt pressed upon Him and the terrors of the shame and death of all the sinners whose place He was taking began to close around Him, that His anguished mind and heart shrank from utter and final abandonment to the doom He had chosen to accept. Jesus recoiled not from the agony of death, but from the black gulf of eternal separation from His Father.

It was in this terrible extremity that Satan made his last desperate bid to defeat the divine plan of salvation. He sought to persuade Jesus that man was not worth the sacrifice. Not even His disciples deserved it. He had already got one of them to betray Him, and before long the rest would forsake Him and leave Him alone. So Satan urged Him to turn from His purpose and give up the contest.

But though the terrible sense of abandonment forced a last appeal to His Father from the lips of Jesus, there followed, without a moment's hesitation, the words which declared that the victory was already won. "Nevertheless," He prayed, "not My will, but Thine, be done." He had come down from heaven to do not His own but His Father's will, and it was God's will which should prevail to the end.

For a time the disciples watched Jesus. They saw Him fall prostrate to the ground in an agony of grief. Then, overcome by physical weariness accentuated by their sorrow at His distress, they fell asleep. For all their confidence that they were "able" to stand by Him, they had failed; and when Jesus rose and made His way with difficulty back to them, "He found them sleeping."

Going over to Peter, the disciple who had been loudest in his protestations of loyalty, Jesus roused him, and in tones of disappointment and gentle reproof said, "Simon, sleepest thou? Couldst not thou watch one hour?" Then as the other two disciples stirred, He went on, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Beyond His disappointment at their failure in His time of need, Jesus wanted them to realize that the crisis which was coming to Him was their crisis too.

If He had come to the greatest test of His earthly life, they had also. If He needed the sustenance of communion with His Father, they needed it more.

When the disciples were fully aroused, Jesus left them and went again to pray. "O My Father," He cried, "if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done." No more did He ask if there was another way to redeem a world of lost sinners. He knew there was not, and now He only sought strength to be obedient even to death.

As Jesus prayed, Satan continued desperately to press his last and greatest temptation upon the mind of the Saviour. Men would reject Him even if He made the sacrifice. His sacrifice would be in vain. The conflict was terrible, but Jesus remained unmoved.

Once again Jesus sought a respite from the struggle in communion with His disciples, but "when He returned, He found them asleep again, (for their eyes were heavy)," and when He awakened them they knew not "what to answer Him." They had not intended to fall asleep, but sorrow and the weakness of the flesh had overcome them.

For the third time Jesus left them and prayed, repeating the same words. And as the approaching agony of death came fearfully upon Him, "His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground."

When Satan tempted Christ at the beginning of His ministry, he made three attempts to break His resolve before retiring defeated. Again in Gethsemane, God allowed Satan three times to seek to undermine His purpose. But as Isaiah had prophetically declared, Jesus did "not fail." Three times Satan pressed his attack and three times he was beaten back by Christ's reiterated declaration of submission to His Father's will. Jesus could not be turned from His mission. He took the cup and drank it to the dregs. Victory was now sure. The way of salvation could now never be closed. The gates of death had been forced open for all who wished to go forth free.

No sooner had Satan retired defeated than God dispatched an angel from heaven to the side of Jesus to strengthen Him after His fearful struggle. As the angel wiped the bloody sweat from the Saviour's brow, the agony passed from His countenance and the peace of absolute surrender to His Father's will possessed Him. The evil angels fell back in defeat, while relief and joy filled the hearts of the watching angels. If the disciples could have shared that wonderful moment they would have been fortified to face the crisis coming to them with calm and confidence, but again they were asleep.

In prayer Jesus gained the victory. Now He was calm, assured, resolute, and indeed eager to go forward to meet His destiny. The disciples, by sleeping, had failed to prepare themselves, and before long would be fleeing in terror from those who came to take Jesus. If only they had heeded the Master's urgent exhortation, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation"!

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:36-45; Mark 14:32-41; Luke 22:40-46; John 18:1.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

Arrest in the Garden

As Jesus looked down at the sleeping disciples, not so much disappointed that they had failed Him, as sad that they had failed to receive strength by watching with Him, He heard sounds in the distance. They told Him that the crisis hour of His earthly life had come.

Very early in His ministry His enemies had determined that He must be put out of the way, and on three occasions Jesus had foretold His arrest, trial, suffering, and death. Time and again attempts had been made to set the mob on Him, or to have Him arrested for disturbing the peace of the temple precincts, but always His assailants had been restrained, as by an unseen hand, because His time had not come. Until Jesus had finished the work which God had given Him, no man had power to do Him harm. Now the witness of His life was completed and He was ready to finish His work on earth by the witness of His death. This time He would make no attempt to escape from the net which was being drawn around Him.

The composition of the party which set out to arrest Jesus strikingly portrayed the forces which had combined against Him. First there were the Sadducean "chief priests." They desired Jesus' death because He was undermining their ecclesiastical administration, and had even dared to interfere with the lucrative temple trade.

Next there were the "scribes," the leaders of the conservative Pharisees. They were anxious to be rid of Jesus because He had poured scorn on their "traditions" and had condemned their formalism and hypocrisy.

Besides these two usually antagonistic parties, now united in opposition to Jesus, there were also some of the "elders," heads of rich Jewish families, whose chief fear was that Jesus might start a revolt against the Romans and bring disaster upon the nation and upon themselves.

To carry out the actual arrest, the priests and elders had called out the temple guard, normally employed to keep order in the temple courts, and anticipating that the disciples of Jesus might put up some resistance to His arrest, they had also contacted the chief officer of the Roman garrison and secured the services of a "band" of soldiers under their officer or tribune. How many there were in this band is not certain, as the term is a vague one, but there may have been fifty.

Lastly, following the temple police and the soldiers, was a motley rabble of ruffians armed with sticks and staves, who had been hastily mobilized by the priests in case of need.

Though the moon was at the full, the guards carried lanterns and torches in case Jesus fled into the dark recesses of the olive grove. Leading the party was the betrayer, Judas Iscariot. The particular mention that he was "one of the twelve" again emphasizes that, as in the case of David's betrayer, he had been Jesus' "familiar friend." Judas would probably have preferred to have kept in the background after leading the priests and rulers to the garden, but as not all the guards and soldiers knew Jesus, he had to arrange a sign to make sure they seized the right person. So he told them, "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He." And remembering previous occasions when Jesus had escaped from His enemies he added, "Hold Him fast."

When Jesus heard the tramp of armed men, and saw the gleam of swords and spears in the red glare of the torches, He could still have foiled His would-be captors, but He did not. "Behold," He said calmly as He roused the disciples, "he is at hand that doth betray Me," and He began to walk slowly toward the multitude.

Moving stealthily forward, as they thought to surprise Jesus, the crowd suddenly came upon Him in a clearing among the trees, His form radiant in the light of the Passover moon. Following the prearranged plan, Judas, in pretended friendship, advanced to meet Jesus, and with his customary greeting, "Hail, Master," he kissed Him. In sacred art Judas is usually represented as kissing Jesus on the cheek, though the more usual salutation of a rabbi by a disciple was by a kiss on the hand. Whatever the form of greeting, however, the word suggests that he kissed Jesus repeatedly and fervently, keeping up his despicable hypocrisy to the last.

"Friend," said Jesus, gazing in sadness upon this erstwhile disciple, "wherefore art thou come?" Then, without waiting for a reply, He added, "Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?"

As soon as the soldiers recognized the signal they moved forward to seize Jesus. Turning from Judas He faced them calmly. "Whom seek ye?" He asked.

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am He," Jesus said. At once they rushed upon Him, but as they approached, the supernatural power which had thrown back His attackers at Nazareth flashed from His face and the crowd "went backward," cowering in disorder "and fell to the ground."

By this momentary manifestation of divine power, Jesus showed that His enemies could do nothing against Him save by permission of God. His submission was to be as voluntary as His sacrifice was vicarious.

When nothing happened to them, those in the foremost ranks slowly rose to their feet and found Jesus still standing motionless before them.

"Whom seek ye?" Jesus asked them again.

"Jesus of Nazareth," they said, not menacingly now but apprehensively, fearing what He might do to them.

Quietly Jesus answered, "I have told you that I am He: if therefore ye seek Me, let these," and He motioned toward His disciples, "go their way." Even in this critical moment Jesus' first thought was for the safety of His disciples. But Peter, brave and impulsive as ever, was not prepared to stand aside and see his Master taken from them.

"Lord, shall we smite with the sword?" he cried, and, quickly as a flash, he drew his knife from its sheath and struck at the man nearest to him. It happened to be Malchus, the personal servant of the high priest, who had doubtless come along to take immediate news of the arrest to his master. His name suggests that he was not himself a Jew, but most likely a Nabatean or Syrian slave.

Malchus tried to dodge the blow and the knife glanced the side of his head, almost severing his right ear. Quickly Jesus waved Peter aside and with the words, "Suffer ye thus far," He put the ear, which was hanging by a mere strip of skin, back into place, and the gash was immediately healed. How significant that Jesus' last miracle was an act of unmerited mercy toward an enemy!

Turning then to Peter He said, "Put up thy sword into the sheath, . . . for all that take the sword shall perish with the sword." By this foolish act Peter had laid himself and the other disciples open to instant reprisal, and if Jesus had not taken prompt action they might easily have been massacred to a man.

If Jesus had wished to repel His assailants, He had no need of Peter's puny weapon. "Thinkest thou," He went on, "that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently [lit., immediately] give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" He could equally have had chariots of fire to defend Him as were sent to protect Elisha at Dothan. That He did not avail Himself of any supernatural aid was because His arrest was all according to the plan for man's salvation which He had agreed with His Father. Peter's misplaced zeal was, therefore, not only foolish, but hindering the purpose of God. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" He said reproachingly to His disciples.

It would have been well if God's people in later days had paid more careful heed to Jesus' reproof on this occasion, for all too often Christians have taken it into their hands to maintain by force what they have mistakenly imagined to be the cause of God.

The weapons of the Christian warfare, as Paul reminded the church, are "not carnal," and the servants of God have no right to take material weapons in their hands either to defend or advance the cause of God. The only sword which is fitting in the hands of the Gospel messengers is the "sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

Jesus warned His faithful followers that they would be subjected to hatred, hostility, and persecution for His sake, but He never once suggested that they would have to fight with material weapons for their survival. Often they would find themselves as sheep among wolves, but they were not to act as wolves in reply. They were to "suffer" persecution, and if need be sacrifice their lives as He was about to do, in the assurance that they would thereby save them for eternity.

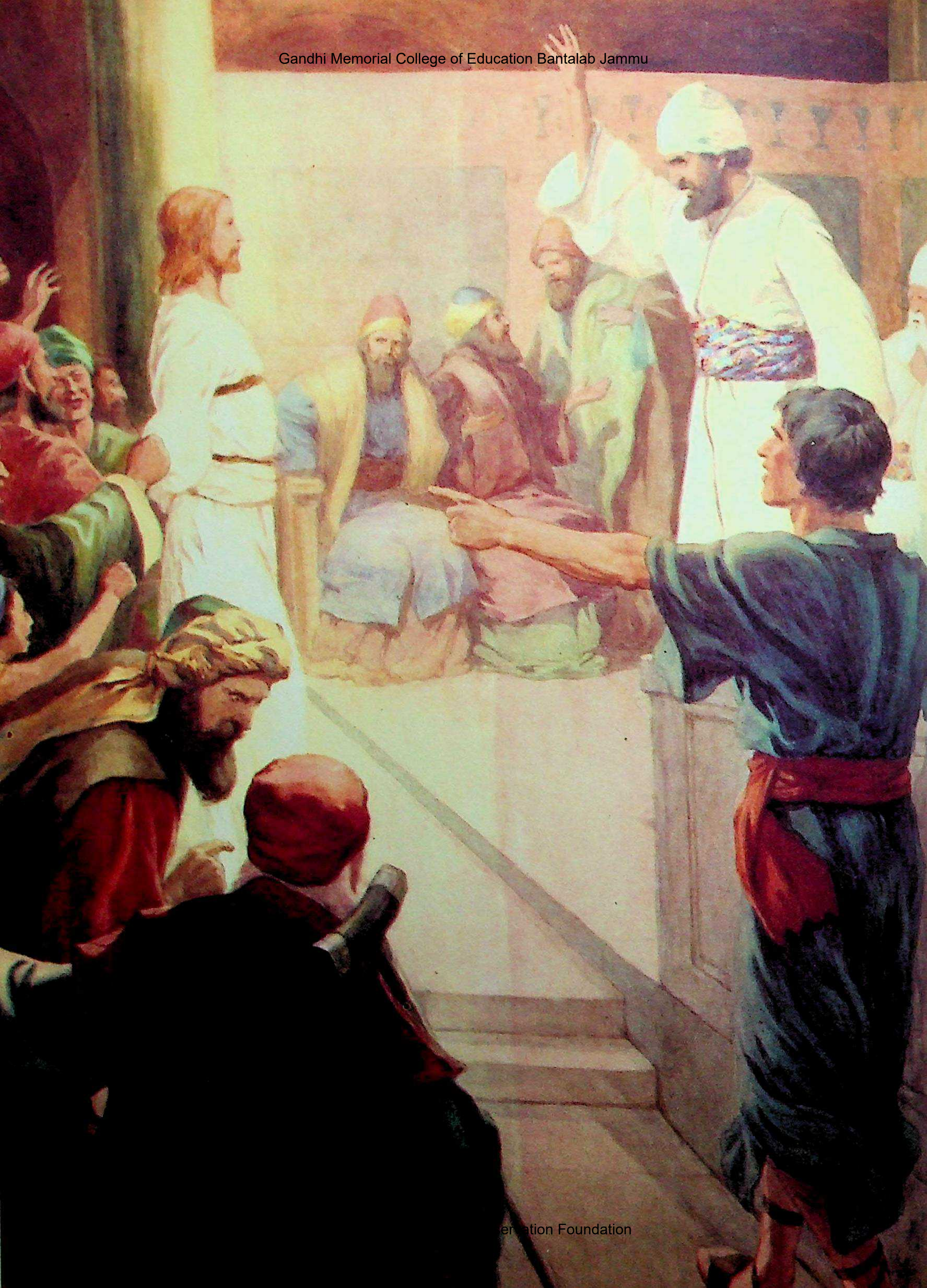
Turning again to His attackers, Jesus said, "Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me." If they had a valid case against Him, why had they feared to arrest Him openly? Clearly it was because their own motives were suspect. But He would not resist them. "This is your hour," He said, "and the power of darkness." And so saying He advanced toward them with hands outstretched.

At the command of the captain of the band and the officers of the Jews, the guards and soldiers moved forward, and in a few moments Jesus' hands were securely tied behind His back and His arms to His sides.

The disciples now realized that Jesus had resolved to give Himself into the hands of His enemies and that they could do nothing to help Him, so, taking advantage of the confusion of the arrest, they slipped away in the darkness. When the guards, having secured Jesus, looked around for them they had all gone, all except "a certain young man," who may well have been John Mark, as only his gospel records the incident. He had followed Jesus and the disciples to the garden, and had watched the arrest from a distance. When he saw them flee he was about to follow them, but waited just a little too long. Some of the guards gave chase and got near enough to catch hold of the linen under-garment which was flying behind him as he ran. In wrenching himself free, the garment was torn, and he dashed off naked leaving most of it in their hands.

There was another who now also slipped away. Judas had done his evil work. The rulers of the Jews had no more need of him and he had separated himself for ever from the disciples. As he hurried away into the darkness the first realization of the dreadful thing he had done came upon him. He had hoped to force Jesus to assert His power, but instead he had set in motion a chain of events which was to take Jesus from the hall of judgment to Calvary's cross.

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:46-56; Mark 14:42-52; Luke 22:47-53; John 18:2-12.



CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

Before Annas

IT was about one o'clock on Friday morning when the priests and soldiers, with their Prisoner, began the return journey to the city. Descending the Mount of Olives they crossed the Kidron and went up the street of steps from the river. The priests may have exercised their right to enter by the Golden Gate and cross the temple courts, forbidden to the people at night, or they may have gone in at one of the southern gates and up the Tyropœon Valley to the palace shared by the high priest, Caiaphas, and his father-in-law, Annas. This stood on Mount Zion not very far from the house where Jesus had celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples.

Had Jesus been an ordinary prisoner He would have been detained till daybreak, as it was not lawful to convene the Sanhedrin court until after the morning sacrifice, but the chief priests feared that if His arrest became known too widely, His sympathizers might gather and demand His release before He could be tried. The high priest knew too that there were some members of the Sanhedrin, like Nicodemus, who were not in favour of taking action against Jesus, and if the trial were delayed they might influence others and make His condemnation difficult. Caiaphas, therefore, had decided that Jesus must be tried and sentenced that very night, and turned over to the Romans the next morning, so that His execution could be all over before the feast of Passover began.

So as soon as Jesus was securely in the palace of the high priest, an urgent summons was sent out to all the "safe" members of the Sanhedrin to assemble for an emergency session. While Caiaphas was arranging this, he sent Jesus into the apartments of his father-in-law for a preliminary unofficial examination.

At this time Annas was without doubt the most influential of the "chief priests"

After preliminary questioning by Annas, Jesus was brought before the Court of the High Priest, Caiaphas.

By FRANK ADAMS

after Caiaphas, for he was the patriarch of a family which had held the high priestly office for more than a quarter of a century. He himself had been appointed high priest by the Legate Quirinius, governor of Syria, back in A.D. 7, the accession year of Tiberius, and had held office till A.D. 14. Though deposed by Valerius Gratus, the immediate predecessor of Pilate, he so completely dominated ecclesiastical circles in Jerusalem that he was able to get five of his sons and a son-in-law appointed to the office of high priest in the next twenty-five years. He was immediately followed by his son, Israel Ben Phabi, then another son, Eleazar, and in A.D. 18 he got his son-in-law, Joseph Caiaphas, appointed. Caiaphas held the office of high priest for the unprecedented period of eighteen years until A.D. 37. Probably it was because he was so well in with Pontius Pilate that he was deposed by Vitellus, prefect of Syria, within a few months of the procurator's removal and departure for Rome.

After Caiaphas, three more sons of Annas reigned, Jonathan, Theophilus, and Annas the Younger, before the family lost its influence. It was in the three months' tenure of office by the last-mentioned that James, the first martyr apostle, was beheaded. One of the last high priests before the disaster of A.D. 70 was Matthias, son of Theophilus and grandson of Annas. Annas himself lived through the hey-day of his family to a great age, and his traditional tomb is pointed out to the south of the city.

Besides holding the highest ecclesiastical offices in the nation, the family of Annas also controlled the temple trade from the "booths of Annas" in the Kidron Valley, and it was against the extension of their lucrative activities into the temple courts that Jesus had struck on the two occasions when He cleansed the temple. The house of Annas was noted for its profiteering; one instance, the raising of the price of doves, the humblest of offerings, evoking an indignant protest from one of the grandsons of Hillel. Even the servants of Annas went about with an air of superiority and did not hesitate, when walking in the streets, to drive the common people out of their way with rods. No wonder the Pharisee Talmud of later days pronounced a curse on "the house of Hanan" and their "viper brood."

From all this we can guess how deep was the hatred of the powerful and avaricious Annas for Jesus, and how he welcomed the opportunity of examining Him.

When Jesus was ushered into his presence about two o'clock in the morning, His fetters were removed, as it was illegal to question a prisoner while still bound. Annas then set about formulating a charge against Him so as to expedite the trial when the Sanhedrin assembled.

He began by asking Jesus about His disciples. Such information would be very useful in convincing the Roman authorities that He was a dangerous revolutionary, and it would also enable them to be rounded up after Jesus had been dealt with. But Jesus detected the cunning old man's purpose and would give him no help.

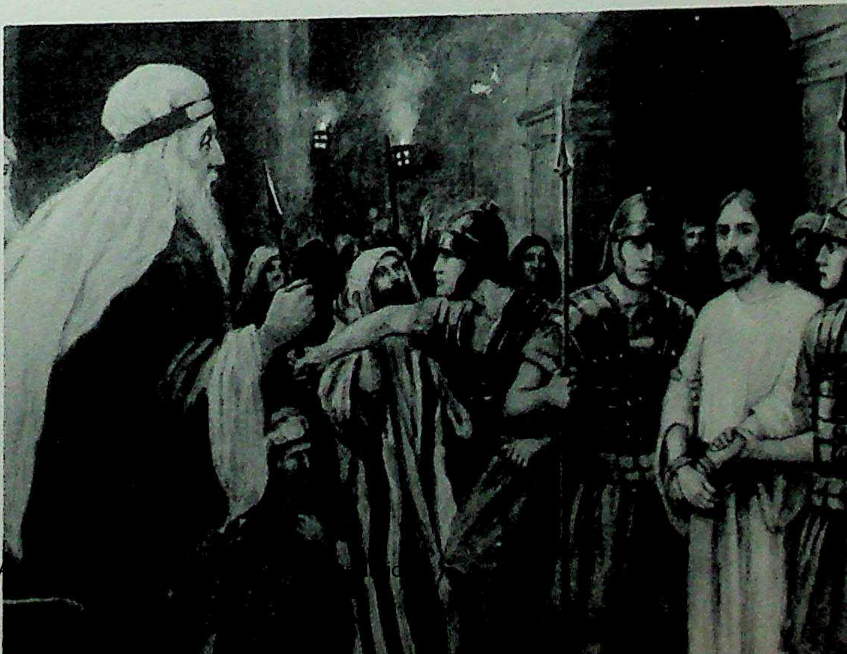
Annas next turned the questioning to His doctrine, hoping to get Jesus to give them some lead toward His condemnation, but again He was quite uncommunicative. "I spake openly to the world," Jesus said; "I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me? Ask them which heard Me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said." If His enemies had been massing evidence against Him for the past two years, surely they did not need any further explanation of what He had taught.

Without doubt, the officers of the guard had had experience before of obstinate prisoners who would not talk, and one of them, feeling that it was his duty to coerce Jesus into confessing His crime, struck Him "with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so?"

Annas should have been the first to reprove the officer for striking a defenceless and uncondemned prisoner, but he said nothing. Jesus could well have called Annas a "whited wall" as Paul did under similar provocation; but instead He turned to the man and said, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?" The officer made no reply, but he did not molest Jesus again.

After some further questioning, Annas realized that Jesus was not to be inveigled into condemning Himself. He knew, too, that it was a gross violation of justice to try to extract a confession from Him, and that Jesus was entirely within His rights in requiring them to produce evidence against Him, especially on a capital charge. So when Caiaphas announced that the Sanhedrin was ready, Annas desisted and commanded the officers to take Jesus across the open court to the council chamber in the high priest's wing of the palace.

This chapter is based on John 18:13; 19-24.



By W. E. EVANS

While Caiaphas was assembling the Sanhedrin, Annas tried to entrap Jesus into condemning Himself.

CC-O.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

Before Caiaphas

IN response to the call of Caiaphas all the available members of the Sanhedrin were assembled in the court of the high priest when Jesus was brought in. Apparently, however, Nicodemus and perhaps one or two others who were known to favour Jesus, had been deliberately excluded to avoid prolonging the trial. In the Sanhedrin there were three categories of members and all are mentioned as being present at this night meeting, namely, "the chief priests, and the elders, and the scribes."

The chief priests included the high priest and all previous holders of the office who were still living, other high officials, like the commander of the temple guard, who deputized for the high priest, and the chiefs of the three temple treasuries, also the heads of the twenty-four courses of the temple priesthood.

The scribes represented the Pharisee party in the Sanhedrin. Rabbi Gamaliel may have belonged to this group, as he was one of the chief teachers of the law at this time, and one of the instructors of Saul, later Paul. Nicodemus, though not present on this occasion, was also one of the scribes.

The elders were the lay leaders of the synagogue of Jerusalem elected from influential families in the city.

Originally the Sanhedrin met in the temple itself, in the "House of Hewn Stones" or "the hall where the law is spoken," in one corner of the temple area near to the bridge over the Tyropœon. In the time of Christ, however, they seem to have moved their place of assembly to the council chamber in the palace of Caiaphas.

The court was arranged in a large semi-circle of tiered seats. In the centre, on his priestly throne, the richly robed Caiaphas presided. On his immediate right sat the eldest member, the Abd-Beth-Din, or Father of the House of Judgment, and on his left the Nasi or Prince of the Wise Men. At either end of each half circle sat the superintending scribes, one to count the votes for acquittal and the other for conviction, and in the centre, in front of the high priest, the recording scribe had his desk. Before the court stood Jesus, with guards on either side.

Absolute integrity was, of course, required of the judges, and to secure experienced judgment, only members over forty years of age were allowed to vote on a capital charge.

Absolute honesty was also required in the witnesses, and where perjury was proved the false witness was subject to the same punishment as would have been meted out to the accused.

In the case of a trial for life, a day of fasting and prayer was required for the consideration of the verdict, to assure the scrupulous administration of justice. This provision immediately placed the court assembled to try Jesus in a quandary. A capital trial could not legally be completed in less than two days and the Passover began in under twenty-four hours. But if they delayed the trial till after the morning sacrifice, which would be about four o'clock, as the rules of the Sanhedrin required, it might not be over till afternoon, and then the execution could not possibly be carried out before sunset. They, therefore, decided to waive both rules and get the trial over during the night, legalizing it by a quick session immediately after daybreak.

The next problem was that although they had been trying to collect evidence against Jesus for two years, they did not really have anything on which to condemn Him to death. The examination before Annas had been intended to supplement the meagre accusations they had, but he had been able to extract nothing from Jesus. So, before the hearing, the unscrupulous Caiaphas gathered the witnesses and assured them that they would be well rewarded if they could secure Jesus' conviction.

Strictly, Jesus should have had opportunity first to present His case and bring witnesses for His defence. But as all His disciples had fled, and none appeared at the palace to testify on His behalf, Caiaphas was only too ready to proceed at once to the prosecution.

Doubtless the witnesses testified to His high-handed treatment of the temple traders, His alleged breaking of the Sabbath, His working on the emotions of the crowd at His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and His Messianic references to Himself, but though they tried to outdo one another in presenting the most damaging case against Jesus, their exaggerated stories all broke down under cross-examination and the witnesses "agreed not together."

The council was exasperated and almost in despair at the lack of any clear accusation against Jesus, when "two false witnesses" were brought who seemed to have the evidence they were looking for.

"We heard Him say," one reported, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands." This, if true, was a serious crime, for doing harm to the temple was an insult to God Himself. Jeremiah, in fact, was judged "worthy of death" when he foretold the destruction of the temple.

However, to sustain this charge another witness was needed, so the second was brought in. Unfortunately for them, he said: "This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." Here was a serious disagreement on a material point. Did Jesus say He would destroy the temple, or did He merely say He was able to do so if He wished? So even this evidence which came nearest to a charge on which a sentence of death could be passed, was invalidated by the inconsistency of the two accounts of what He said. The council was furious to be so near yet so far from its goal.

Realizing that if this contradictory testimony was pronounced void, the case against Jesus would fall to the ground, Caiaphas quite illegally tried to get Jesus to condemn Himself by admitting to one or other of these divergent stories.

"Answerest Thou nothing?" he demanded of Jesus. "What is it which these witness against Thee?"

Jesus could have defended Himself by declaring that neither story was true, for His statement on the occasion referred to had nothing to do with the temple at all. What He actually said was that they would "destroy" the temple of His body, but that in three days He would "raise it up" from the dead. But to Caiaphas's great annoyance Jesus "held His peace, and answered nothing."

In a last desperate effort to get Jesus to condemn Himself, the high priest stepped down from his throne and advanced toward Him. "I adjure Thee by the living God," he said, "that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

Caiaphas couched his question very subtly. He did not simply ask Jesus if He claimed to be the Christ, for this would not have been enough to condemn Him to death. The popular expectation concerning the Messiah was that He would be a "man of men" as Trypho expressed it. Recent documents about Bar-Cochiba, the last of the Jewish rebels in the second century, indicate that he was set forth by one rabbi as a human messiah. So Caiaphas asked Jesus also to say if He claimed to be the divine Son of God. If He would confirm this claim they would not need to press the lesser charge of His alleged words against the temple.

The council waited with bated breath for His answer, for although it was entirely out of order to expect a prisoner to condemn Himself, they were prepared to act on His confession if they had to.

Thus far in His trial Jesus had refused to give them any help by commenting on the evidence which had been given, but now He had the opportunity before the highest court of the land to make a final statement concerning Himself. He knew that it would be used to condemn Him, but it would also condemn them for their rejection of Him. And so He spoke.

"I am," He categorically declared to both charges, and though in the existing circumstances this claim might seem fantastic, He added, "Nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Brushing aside the fearful warning which Jesus uttered, Caiaphas seized on this self-confession as the decisive evidence they sought, and taking hold of his outer robe at the neck he tore it down to the girdle at his waist.

To rend one's garment was a symbolic act signifying deep emotion. Jacob rent his garment when he thought that Joseph was dead. Job rent his as successive calamities fell on him. King Hezekiah rent his clothes when Rabshakeh of Assyria pronounced doom upon Jerusalem, and in the New Testament, Paul and Barnabas restrained the people of Lystra from worshipping them by rending their clothes. Now, in mock zeal for God's honour, Caiaphas rent his robe crying, "He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy. What think ye?"

In this pronouncement, Caiaphas again was out of order for, though supposedly the judge, he was now directing the court to find Jesus guilty. But the Sanhedrin were not worried about the niceties of legal procedure. They had, at last, the evidence on which He could be condemned, and with one accord they cried, "He is guilty of death."

It has been claimed that no fewer than twenty-seven illegalities were perpetrated during the trial of Jesus, but whether all these can be sustained it is difficult to assess, as the only codified Jewish law we possess is the Mishna, and this was not compiled until about A.D. 200. How far, therefore, it corresponds with the Sadducean criminal code of Jesus' day we cannot now be absolutely sure. We do know, however, that the trial contravened a number of requirements of the Mosaic law, and of course the greatest illegality of all was that before the trial began the Sanhedrin had already determined that it should end with Jesus' condemnation to death. Jesus was not put on trial to test His guilt or innocence. The sentence had already been decided on, and the court only met to formulate a charge!

As soon as the sentence was passed, the court was in an uproar. Forgetting their supposed dignity, the priests and elders surged around Jesus to vent their spite on Him. They spat in His face, pushed Him about, and exposed Him to every indignity. Then, to make further sport, they blindfolded Him and, striking Him with the palms of their hands across His face, they demanded, "Prophesy unto us, Thou Christ, who is he that smote Thee?"

When the Sanhedrin had tired of their shameful mockery and abuse of Jesus, they ordered the officers to take Him to the guard room of the palace to await the dawn for a final session of the council to make the sentence quite proper! Could hypocrisy have gone further? It was as Jesus was led away across the courtyard from the hall of judgment that He witnessed the end of another drama that had been going on there while He was on trial, in which one of His closest disciples, Peter, had been tragically involved.

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:57-68; Mark 14:53-65; Luke 22:54, 63-65; John 18:24.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIX

Peter's Denial

WHEN the disciples had recovered from the shock of Jesus' arrest, they followed the crowd at a safe distance and saw Him taken into the palace of the high priest.

Now it happened that John was known to the servants of Caiaphas, most likely by reason of his supplying fish from Galilee to the Jerusalem market. There was a town near Capernaum called Taricheæ, or "The Pickleries," from whence cured fish were evidently distributed throughout Palestine, and as Zebedee had a sizeable fishing fleet he would naturally be interested in this trade. John may have regularly visited Jerusalem in connection with the family business, and so had become known to the porters at the high priest's house.

In view of this, Peter suggested that John should go to the palace and try to get him in as well. Then they could see what happened to their beloved Master. It was a daring idea, but as on so many earlier occasions, Peter did not ask himself whether his courage would be sustained if he got into difficulties. When they got inside, John sought a quiet corner where he would not invite attention, but Peter boldly went over to the charcoal brazier which was burning in the lower courtyard. From there he could see up the steps which led to the chambers of Annas on one side and the council room of Caiaphas on the other.

The April night was quite cool and the servants and soldiers who were not on duty were sitting around talking about the prisoner who had just been brought in. Thinking he would not be recognized, Peter listened and watched as he warmed himself at the fire, but in a short time the girl who had admitted him joined the group. When she took a closer look at Peter in the glow of the fire she suddenly said to him, "Art not thou also one of His disciples?"

As Jesus was led from the Court of the High Priest, He looked in disappointment and sorrow upon Peter. By CARL BLOCH

Taken aback by the question, Peter averted his face and replied abruptly, "I am not." Then, fearful that he might be questioned further, he moved away into the covered porch which led to the outer gate. As he entered the shadow of the arch a cock crew in a nearby courtyard.

In his stress of mind Peter did not connect the first crowing of the cock with the warning Jesus had given him some hours before, but as he was standing there another maid approached and renewed her friend's accusation. "This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth," she declared to those standing near.

Really alarmed now that he would be found out, Peter denied the charge with an angry oath, crying, "I do not know this Man . . . neither understand I what thou sayest." And he moved again across the courtyard.

Peter managed to avoid further questioning for about an hour, and then just as he thought the suspicions against him were allayed, one of the servants of the high priest, a kinsman of Malchus whose ear Peter had cut off, came by. Seeing him he stopped and said, "Did not I see thee in the garden with Him?"

Quickly an excited crowd gathered round and another joined in, "Surely thou art one of them: for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto." Just as north country folk here speak with a broader accent than those in the south, the Galilean speech was noticeably different from the more cultured and polished speech of the capital, and in his agitation Peter unconsciously gave himself away.

At this Peter "began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak," and immediately the cock crew again.

Even then Peter might not have remembered the words of Jesus, but at that moment the door of the council chamber opened and Jesus was led across the courtyard. As He passed Peter He heard his oaths and turning He "looked upon" him, or literally He "looked into" him.

It was a terrible moment for Jesus. The sentence of death had just passed upon Him and now, as He was led away, He heard one of His closest disciples disown and deny Him utterly.

Yet Jesus did not look on Peter in anger, but only in disappointment and sorrow. As their eyes met, Peter remembered what Jesus had said to him, and he was overwhelmed by what he had done. The dreadful realization came to him that he was no better than the traitor Judas. For all his boasting that he would never desert Jesus, he had basely forsaken Him in the hour of His greatest need.

Profiting by the momentary diversion of attention to Jesus, Peter slipped through the crowd and, opening the wicket gate in the great door, he went out into the street. The Bible does not tell us which direction Peter took. A grotto at the south end of Mount Zion, over which a church was later built, is called the Grotto of the Cockcrowing, but it seems more likely that he would go back to Gethsemane to the spot where Jesus had knelt only a few hours before. There he fell to the ground and, burying his head in his cloak, he "wept bitterly" at his failure. Now he remembered the words of Jesus when He had found them sleeping, "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." If only he had resisted sleep and watched with Jesus, this might not have happened.

The full and honest account in the gospels of the failure of one of the disciples closest to Jesus is surely a most striking testimony to the truth of the Bible story. If the disciples had been trying to foist a false story about Jesus upon the people of their day, they certainly would not have allowed the slightest stain on the character of any of the apostles to be recorded. Yet here faithfully set down is a full confession of Peter's treacherous denial of his Master in the crisis hour of His life. The only conclusion one can draw is that the record is absolutely trustworthy and that its purpose is to reveal the outworking of the purpose of God despite the frailty of the human instruments He had chosen.

Not only does the story of Peter's denial corroborate the truth of the Gospel story, but it also provides a solemn warning against false confidence in our capacity to resist temptation. Under Satan's attacks, Christ repulsed the adversary three times but in Peter's three temptations he was defeated every time because he felt himself quite able to cope with any situation which might arise. We need constantly to lean upon God, and never more than when we think ourselves strong.

Contrasting Peter in the garden and Peter in the palace yard, we realize also that physical courage may be easier to achieve than moral courage. Peter was brave as a lion in the conflict in the garden, but a coward in the face of ridicule and derision.

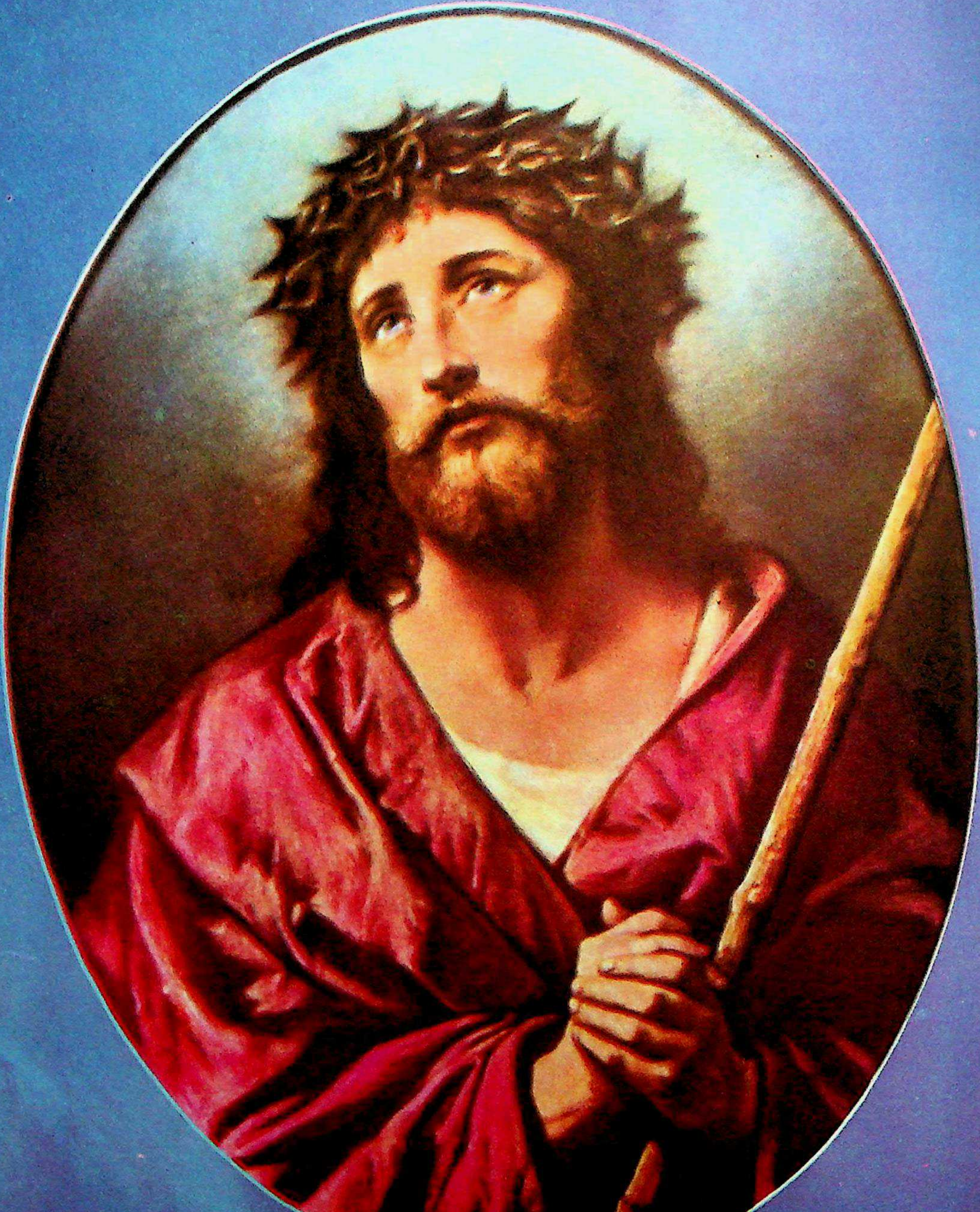
Finally, Peter's tragic fall shows how one sin leads to another more serious sin. Sin accelerates. The moral, therefore, is not to begin.

But Peter's experience has in it also great encouragement, for it shows that if, in true repentance, we confess our sins and seek God's forgiveness, He will lift us up and receive us back into friendship and fellowship.

How ready Jesus was to forgive His erring disciple is evident from the fact that when He revealed Himself to the women at the tomb after His resurrection, He told them to tell the other disciples "and Peter." Moreover, Peter was the first of the disciples to see Him alive from the dead, and when they went forth to preach the message of the risen Christ, it was he who led out in the first great evangelistic sermon at Pentecost.

That Peter never forgot the lesson he had learned is evident from the emphasis he places in his epistles on vigilance and steadfastness that we may not fall.

This chapter is based on Matthew 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:25-27.



CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

The Remorse of Judas

On the morning of Friday, the fourteenth of Nisan, and the preparation day for the Passover, as soon as it was light—which would be about half-past five or six o'clock—the Sanhedrin court met again to ratify the sentence passed on Jesus during the night.

From the cell where He had been confined He was brought into the court room, where now the "whole council" were assembled. This suggests that some who could not be reached during the night had now been contacted, though it is doubtful if Nicodemus and others who favoured Jesus were summoned even to this final session.

As all the charges respecting His doctrine and His alleged words against the temple had broken down through the confusion of evidence, the accusation had now been narrowed to two points, His claim to be the Messiah and His further claim to be the Son of God. To give all who had not been present at the earlier trial evidence of these charges, the high priest put to Jesus his two leading questions again.

"Art Thou the Christ? tell us," he first asked. This was the more important charge to establish to ensure the confirmation of the sentence by Pilate, because it had a political connotation. If they could prove that Jesus was seeking to make Himself the Messianic leader of the Jews, they could be certain that Pilate would condemn Him as a revolutionary. They knew, of course, perfectly well that Jesus had never claimed temporal power and that He had, in fact, refused the kingship offered Him by the people; but if they could get Him to admit Messiahship, they could put the most serious construction on it in their plea to Pilate.

Jesus saw through the cunning of Caiaphas and declined to make his task easy.

Jesus ended His earthly life wearing a crown of thorns. When we see Him again, He will have on His brow a royal diadem.

By B. PLOCKHORST

"If I tell you," He said, "ye will not believe. And if I also ask you [questions which would establish My innocence], ye will not answer Me, nor let Me go."

If He had admitted the charge, He knew the court would ratify the sentence of death on Him; and if He declared that He was not, they would sentence Him as a confessed imposter. There was, therefore, no purpose whatsoever in keeping up the pretence of a trial. But, He warned them, whether they accepted His claim or not now, "Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God." And then it would be too late for them to make their peace with Him.

Taking no notice of Jesus' demand that the hypocritical proceedings be brought to an end, the high priest pressed his second question, "Art Thou then the Son of God?"

This was the decisive charge in Jewish eyes. The claim to be the "Son of man" was not enough to constitute blasphemy. But if He would claim divinity by saying that He was the "Son of God," then the case would be proved to the hilt.

When Jesus replied quietly, "Ye say [correctly] that I am," they were exultant. Throwing up their hands in mock horror they cried with one voice, "What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth." And for the third time the sentence that He was worthy of death was pronounced on Him, followed by more mocking and inhuman abuse.

Now that the sentence had been passed at a legal session of the Sanhedrin, the priests and rulers were ready to proceed with their prisoner to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, for the confirmation and execution of the sentence. This Jesus Himself had foreseen when He said that He would be "delivered unto the Gentiles" and "crucified."

There was no need now for the secrecy in which the trial had, up to this time, taken place. In fact, the co-operation of the mob was now desirable to convince the governor of the heinousness of Jesus' crime. So the priests and rulers proceeded to the temple to call the people to accompany them to the Prætorium.

It was probably at this time that Judas, who had followed the proceedings of the successive trials with increasing alarm, could contain himself no longer. What he had expected Jesus to do we shall never know, but certainly he never thought that He would allow Himself to be put to death.

Hurrying to the temple with the bag of money he had received for betraying his Master, he pushed his way among the chief priests and elders, who were congratulating themselves on the success of their plans, and grasped the high priest's robe in an effort to gain his attention. "I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood," he cried.

Shaking Judas off, the high priest turned in anger and contempt from him, saying shortly, "What is that to us? See thou to that." If Judas had a conscience about what he had done, that was his affair. They certainly had none.

Filled with horror and remorse at the enormity of his crime, Judas "cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed."

He could not, however, rid himself of his sense of guilt by parting from his ill-gotten gains. Appalled and desperate, he decided he could end his agony only by taking his life. Rushing from the temple he ran through the streets and out of the city, and in some lonely spot beyond the walls he "hanged himself."

What a terrible end it was to which Judas came. When he first joined Jesus he had felt no real call to a higher life. He thought he was doing Jesus a favour in throwing in his lot with Him, and he continued with Him for what he hoped to get when Jesus assumed kingly power. Soon he was criticizing the way Jesus was carrying out His ministry. He was angry that He allowed John to be beheaded, that He refused to accept kingship from the grateful crowds after the feeding of the five thousand, and he was impatient at Jesus' repeated assertions that He would have to suffer and to die.

When he could not gain support from the disciples, Judas determined to force the issue and compel Jesus to declare Himself. Right up to the trial, Judas was sure that He would escape from His enemies; and when He did not, he realized too late that his carefully-laid plot had recoiled on his own head, to encompass not merely his physical death, but his eternal ruin.

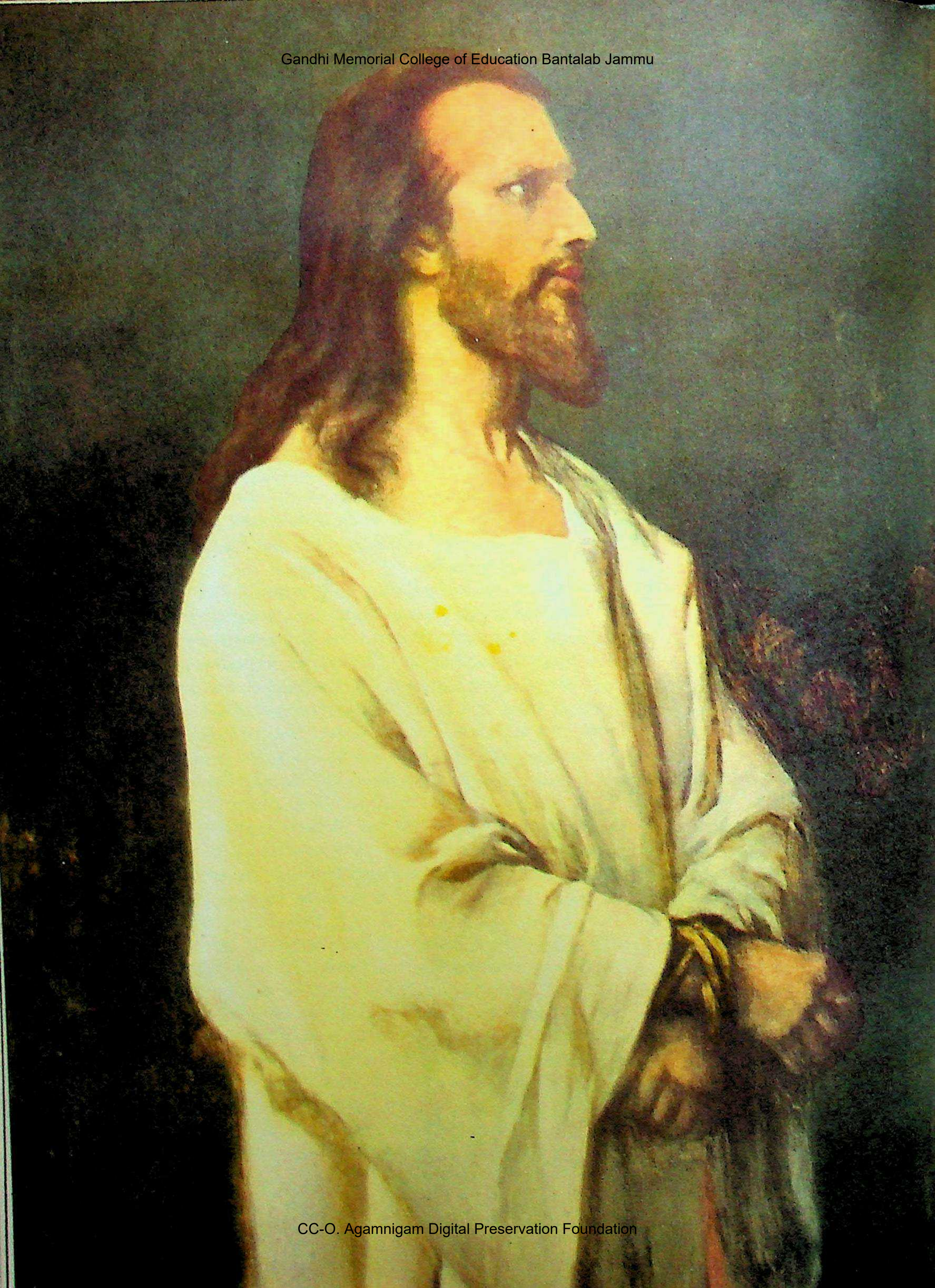
When Judas left the temple, the priests picked up the coins he had hurled to the ground and debated what they should do with them. As the money was the reward of treachery they could not bring themselves to put it back into the treasury. "It is not lawful," they said, "for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood." Jesus had more than once accused the Pharisees of being over-scrupulous in the petty details of their traditions while neglecting weightier moral principles, and this was indeed the climax of their hypocrisy. They had descended to abysmal depths to destroy Jesus, and yet when the price of treachery was returned to them by the tool of their villainy, they were too scrupulous to put it back into the temple coffers.

After consultation; the chief priests decided to buy with it a plot of land called "the potter's field" as a place for the burial of strangers who died without friends while visiting Jerusalem. The name of the field suggests that it was a worked-out clay pit in the Hinnom Valley, on the south side of the city, near the Potter's Gate.

By their act they fulfilled yet another prophecy of the passion, for Zechariah by inspiration had not only specified the exact price of betrayal, but also added, "And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: . . . and I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

The priests would have kept the whole unsavoury affair a secret if they could, but it was not long before it became known to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ever after, this field was called Aceldama, or "the field of blood."

This chapter is based on Luke 22:66-71; Matthew 27:1, 3-10; Mark 15:1.



CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHT

To Pilate and Herod

AS soon as the Sanhedrin had pronounced Jesus "guilty of death" He was again fettered and led away to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, for confirmation of the sentence and immediate execution. This was necessary because, since Judea became a Roman province, the power of life and death had been withdrawn from the Jewish courts. So Jesus' own prophecy that, after suffering "many things" of the Jewish rulers, He would be "delivered unto the Gentiles" to die, was fulfilled.

Normally the Roman governors of Palestine lived in the Palace of Herod at Cæsarea, but at festival times they took up residence in the capital to ensure the maintenance of order. At first the Roman governors used as their Prætorium the former Palace of Herod on the west side of the city near the Jaffa Gate, where Herodian masonry is still to be seen among the ruins of the Turkish barracks. Later, however, the Prætorium was transferred to the fortress of Antonia dominating the north-west corner of the temple area. This fits in with the statement that the rulers and people came "up" to it from the city.

According to Josephus there had been a citadel here as far back as the days of Solomon to protect the temple on the north side. At that time it was called Bireh, or the "tower of the house." It was restored by the Jews after the return from captivity as the "tower of Hananeel" and was strengthened further by the Hasmoneans. Simon Maccabeus and John Hyrcanus both used it as a residence and added to its fortifications. The castle was finally rebuilt "like a royal palace" and doubled in size by Herod the Great, who made it into two courts with an enclosing wall and corner towers nearly 200 feet high. To it he gave the name Antonia after Mark Antony.

The inner court was used by Pilate as a residence and a "hall of judgment."

When the Sanhedrin had passed the sentence of death upon Jesus, He was bound again and led away to Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor.

By M. MUNKACSY

A Moslem school now stands on this portion of the site. It was richly paved with agate and lazuli, the ceiling was of gilded cedar wood, and it was lavishly furnished. Philo mentions the gilded tables in Pilate's apartment.

An outer colonnaded court, used by the garrison, lay to the north and has been found extending across the street called Via Dolorosa and under the convent buildings on the other side. It was flagged with great stone slabs a yard square and half as thick, which were found scored by the tracks of horses and chariots. Sockets are discernible, which may have held posts for tethering horses or the flags of the legion. Cut into the surface also are the geometrical figures of a dice game called margella, with which the soldiers amused themselves when off duty. This must be the Gabbatha or "Pavement" of the palace.

Beyond the colonnade to the east were the buildings which housed the garrison. Usually this consisted of 600 men, but when the governor took up residence it was reinforced by a cavalry detachment.

The entrance to the Prætorium was a monumental gateway of three arches with a total width of seventy feet. The central gate still arches over the Via Dolorosa near the Turkish barracks, while one of the smaller arches can be seen in the building on the north side of the road. From the gateway a road sixty feet wide descended to the town.

An esplanade on the south side of the palace fort looked down into the temple courts and two flights of stairs gave the soldiers quick access in case of rioting. Extensive foundations and a honeycomb of passages have been discovered beneath the present Moslem buildings which occupy the area, as well as an underground pool which supplied water to the fortress.

The governor or procurator of Judea at this time, Pontius Pilate, was the fifth holder of the office since the deposition of Archelaus. He owed his appointment in A.D. 26 to Sejanus, the chief prefect of Tiberius, and he was removed from office in A.D. 36, not long after the fall and murder of his benefactor. The name Pontius suggests that he may have been connected with the Pontii, an old Roman family, while Pilate may indicate that he was a cavalry officer.

Josephus and Philo both agree that Pilate was proud, brutal, unjust, and corrupt, and Agrippa I, writing to the Emperor Caligula about him after his deposition from office, said that "he was of an unbending and ruthlessly hard character," and that in his day "corruption, violence, robbery, oppression, humiliations, constant executions without trial, and unlimited, intolerable cruelty" were rife. While we might expect a Jewish historian and a Jewish king to be prejudiced, these estimates are fully borne out by what we know outside the Bible of his actions.

His first act, in defiance of Jewish religious susceptibilities, was to order the Roman insignia bearing pagan symbols and the emperor's effigy to be carried into Jerusalem and planted in the citadel near to the temple. For five days he obstinately held out against a deputation who came to Cæsarea to complain, and only when they declared themselves willing to be slaughtered rather than depart unsatisfied did he have the offending insignia removed.

Not long after, however, he repeated the offence by having gilded votive shields to the emperor set up in the former palace of Herod. This time the Jews appealed directly to Cæsar, who compelled Pilate to desist from such provocative actions.

In spite of this rebuke, Pilate later robbed the temple treasury for the construction of a water conduit from the Pools of Solomon, near Hebron, to Jerusalem, and ordered a massacre of the crowds who gathered to demonstrate against the desecration.

The gospels record the slaughter of a party of Galileans in the temple forecourt for alleged revolutionary activity, and it was a similar act of violence against the Samaritans that finally caused Vitellus, prefect of Syria, to send him back to Rome.

These incidents reveal Pilate's contempt of the Jewish rulers, but they also show why he was afraid to go too far in provoking them, lest they should denounce him again to Cæsar.

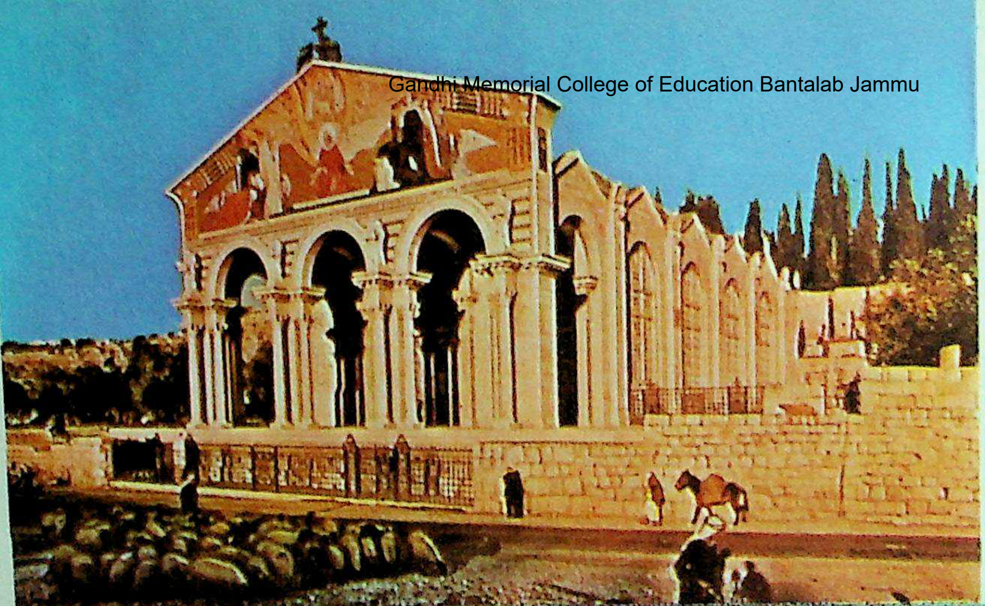
The record states that "it was early," probably around 6.30 a.m., when the priests with their Prisoner reached the Prætorium. There was nothing unusual in this, as Roman governors generally held court before the day became hot, so that midday could be devoted to rest and the afternoon to social life and amusement. In Rome business began about 6 a.m., and the law courts opened at eight. Even so it was rather too "early," for Pilate and it was with no good grace that he dressed and prepared to see them.

Because they did not wish to incur defilement by going into a Gentile house just before the Passover, the priests asked if he would come to the entrance of the Prætorium to give judgment. Pilate was still further annoyed at the request, but not wanting to give unnecessary offence, he had a portable tribunal set up at the gate, where it now crosses the Via Dolorosa, and ordered Jesus to be brought before him. "What accusation bring ye against this Man?" Pilate demanded when he was seated.

Instead of making a formal charge against Jesus, the rulers replied, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto thee." It was an insult to Pilate to imagine that he would be prepared to endorse their decision without even knowing what it was, and Pilate showed his anger by curtly ordering them to depart. "Take ye Him and judge Him according to your law," he said.

Realizing that they would have to treat Pilate with greater respect if they wanted him to condemn Jesus, they replied obsequiously: "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death."

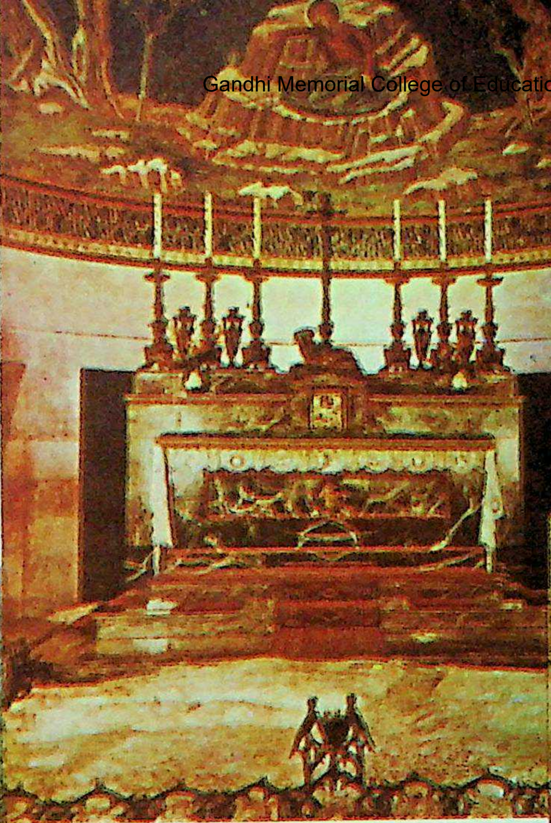
Now that they had to state their accusation against Jesus they realized that it was no use charging Him with blasphemy, as Pilate would have dismissed this as a purely religious matter in which he had no competence. But they had prepared for this contingency at the earlier trials by getting Jesus' confession that He was the Messiah, which had a political connotation, and they also had the evidence



LEFT
The Church of the Agony stands in the Garden of Gethsemane upon the traditional spot where Jesus knelt in prayer.

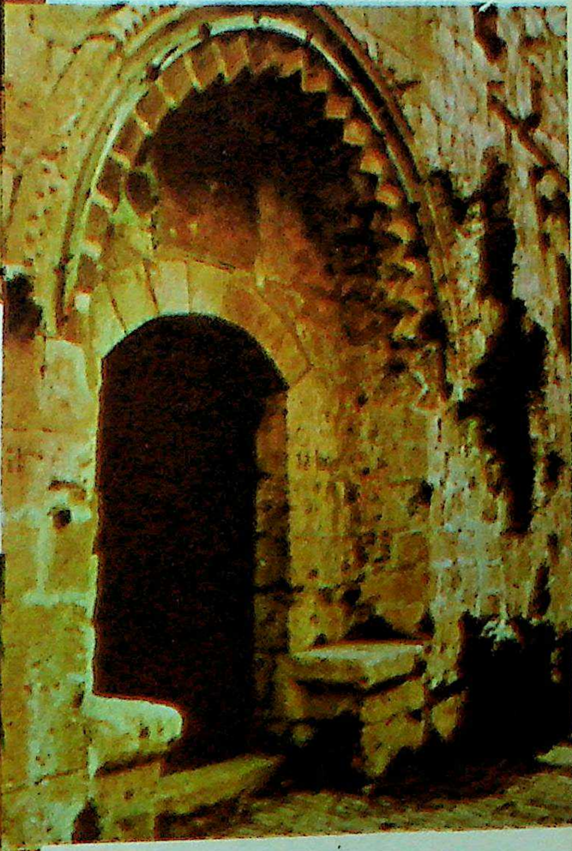
RIGHT
Among the carefully tended flower beds of the Garden of Gethsemane are a number of gnarled old olive trees. None, however, could possibly go back as far as the days of Jesus.

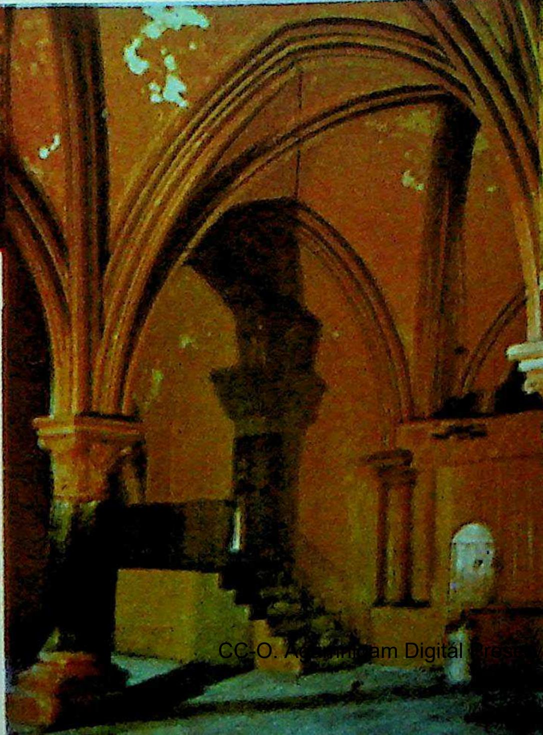
LEFT
It was by the light of the full moon that Jesus and His disciples left the Upper Room of the Last Supper and crossed the Kidron to Gethsemane.



LEFT
The bare rock which rises before the altar of the Church of Gethsemane is reputed to be the "Rock of the Agony."

RIGHT
The entrance to the House of the Last Supper, perhaps the home of the parents of John Mark.





LEFT
The traditional "Upper Room" where Jesus celebrated the Last Supper with His disciples, and where later the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled believers.

about the tribute money. So they now charged Jesus with treason against Rome on three counts. He was, they said, a revolutionary agitator who had been seditiously "perverting the nation," He had sought to restrain the people from giving "tribute" or taxes "to Cæsar," and He had proclaimed Himself "Christ a King."

These charges, if true, were very serious ones, of which Pilate would have to take notice. But, of course, they were absolutely false. Jesus had always discouraged violent action against the Romans, He had counselled the people to "render . . . unto Cæsar," the things that were Cæsar's, and He had refused to allow the people to make Him King.

As Pilate looked at Jesus, even he could not believe that this calm, dignified Man was a hot-headed revolutionary. So he determined to examine Him himself. Bidding the soldiers bring Jesus inside, he went back into the judgment hall, while the priests waited at the gate. Mounting the raised semi-circular dais or "tribunal," which may have been the golden throne of Archelaus, Pilate ordered Jesus to stand before him.

"Art Thou the King of the Jews?" he asked as he began his examination. Jesus meant no disrespect when He replied, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of Me?" What He wanted to know was whether Pilate understood what sort of king the Messiah of the Jews was according to the Scriptures.

Pilate at once pointed out that not being a Jew he could not be expected to understand such matters. He had to rely on what he was told. "Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered Thee unto me: what hast Thou done?" he demanded.

Then Jesus replied plainly, "My kingdom is not of this world: if My kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is My kingdom not from hence."

Pilate found it difficult to imagine a kingdom which was "not of this world" and not supported by force of arms, and in a puzzled tone he repeated his question, "Art Thou a King then?"

Jesus replied, "Thou sayest [correctly] that I am a King," and added, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice."

The kingdom which Jesus was founding in the earth was not a temporal kingdom. It claimed no territory in this world order, though its sway was wide as the world. Its throne was the throne of grace, and its subjects were those who received His truth by faith into their hearts. Its laws were not fleshly ordinances, but the eternal law of God. It was extended not by force of arms but by the Gospel of love, yet when all earthly nations had passed, it would endure for ever.

Jesus' answer satisfied Pilate that he was neither a political revolutionary nor a rival of Cæsar. He was evidently an idealist who thought He knew ultimate "truth," but He was not a disturber of the peace. So, with a rather contemptuous reference to the "truth" being a very debatable subject anyhow, Pilate took Jesus back to the gate of the Prætorium and told the Jews, "I find no fault in this Man."

At once there was a fierce outcry from the disappointed priests, who began to assert with greater vehemence, "He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place."

It was at this point that Pilate manifested the first evidence of the indecision which was to result in his defeat at the hands of the astute Jews. If he had been just he would have said, "I have given my verdict," and dismissed the case. But he knew the rulers hated him, and for the sake of expediency he wanted to extricate himself without antagonizing them. So he turned to Jesus and said, "Hearest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee." But to Pilate's amazement Jesus "answered nothing."

The governor now found himself in a serious quandary. He was sure that Jesus was the victim of a plot and he wanted to release Him, but he dared not stir up any more animosity against himself. Suddenly he recalled that the Jews had said that Jesus had preached in Galilee. Here was a way of getting rid of the case by passing Him on to Herod Antipas, who still ruled Galilee and Perea as a vassal of Rome. He probably hoped that Herod would view the case as he had done and acquit Jesus. Thus justice would be done without his personally incurring the anger of the Jews. At the same time it provided an opportunity for a diplomatic courtesy which might patch up his relations with Herod which had been strained since the slaughter of the Galileans in the temple.

Fortunately, Herod had come up to the feast of Passover, not so much from conviction, for he was half Samaritan and half Idumean, but for the sake of appearances and to participate in the social life of the capital at Passover time. So Jesus was bound again and sent under guard to the Hasmonean palace on the Xystus Square just across the Tyropœan Bridge from the east gate of the temple.

The dissolute king Herod Antipas, youngest son of Herod the Great, the murderer of John the Baptist and the incestuous husband of Herodias, had long wanted to see Jesus. When he had first heard of Him he was afraid, thinking He might be John the Baptist come back to life. When this fear was dispelled he was curious to see Him, hoping that Jesus would work a miracle for his amusement. But though Herod asked Jesus many questions He "answered him nothing."

Herod was angry and humiliated that Jesus should treat him with such contempt, but he was as unconvinced as Pilate that He was guilty of the accusations the chief priests repeated to him. To Herod, Jesus was just another deluded religious fanatic, and mockingly he ordered Him to be decked in one of his discarded robes of royal purple and sent back, still uncondemned, to Pilate, with a cordial greeting, restoring friendly relations between the two rulers.

This chapter is based on John 18:28-38; Luke 23:1-12; Matthew 27:2, 11-14; Mark 15:2-5.

CHAPTER
THIRTY-NINE

Pilate Pronounces Sentence

WHEN Herod sent Jesus back to the Prætorium, Pilate was annoyed and disappointed. He had hoped to dispose of Jesus without incurring the displeasure of the Jewish rulers, but now he had Him on his hands again, and he would have to make some decision. So once more Pilate went out to the Jews who had congregated at the entrance gate and said to them, "Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him."

Even if he could not understand the crime of Jesus, Pilate argued, they could not deny the weight of Herod's opinion, and if he found nothing worthy of death in Him, Jesus could not in justice be condemned. If it would meet their wishes, however, Pilate suggested, he would "chastise" Jesus and then "release Him."

This was the second evidence of Pilate's fatal weakness. If he agreed with Herod's judgment, he should have set Jesus free at once. To try to appease the Jews by scourging an innocent man was despicable and cowardly. But they would not even consider this. Nothing less than a sentence of death would satisfy them.

Pilate was caught on the horns of a fearful dilemma. Justice demanded that he should release Jesus, but he knew that if he did this the Jewish leaders would stir up a riot, the consequences of which, with Jerusalem packed with Passover pilgrims, he dared not contemplate. As he sat before the people, undecided what to do, an attendant brought a letter from his wife. It may be that Jesus had been talked about in the palace, and when Pilate was called early to deal with His case, his wife fell asleep again and dreamed of Him. In her dream she was

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At the gate of the Prætorium, Pilate made a last attempt to arouse the pity of the crowd.
By CISERI

given a divine premonition of what would befall her husband if he condemned Jesus, and she hastened to send a warning message to him. "Have thou nothing to do with that just Man," she wrote: "for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of Him."

Pilate quailed at the contents of the letter, believing that it was a message from the gods, and at that moment a last loophole of escape occurred to him. It was customary among the Romans to declare an amnesty on the occasion of feasts in honour of the gods, and to release a certain number of convicted criminals, and a similar practice seems to have been instituted in Palestine in the days of the Maccabees to keep the peace among the warring factions of their day. It occurred to Pilate that this custom might help him in his perplexity.

In prison at this time there was a notorious bandit called Barabbas who, under the guise of patriotism, had ravaged Roman outposts and the roads leading to Jerusalem. Recently, when he carried his activities into the city itself, he had been captured and cast into prison together with many of his followers. His name Bar Abba suggests that he was the wayward son of a rabbi, and some manuscripts give his full name as Jesus Barabbas.

Pilate knew that the chief priests and rulers held no brief for Barabbas, who was a public terror, and he could not believe that the crowd would ask for his release rather than that of Jesus, so he said to them: "Ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: . . . Whom will ye that I release unto you? [Jesus] Bar Abba, or Jesus which is called the Christ?"

If they had not been prompted, the crowd, from a sense of justice, would have asked for the release of Jesus, for many among the multitude had listened to Him in the temple and witnessed His miracles. But when the priests began to cry out that He had been condemned by the Sanhedrin, they felt that He must be evil, and joined in the cry, "Away with this Man, and release unto us Barabbas."

"What will ye then that I shall do unto Him whom ye call the King of the Jews?" Pilate demanded in exasperation. And the murderous cry went up, "Crucify Him."

Pilate saw that his plan had failed and that he would have to release Barabbas as he had offered, but he still hoped that the crowd would relent and be content with some lesser punishment for Jesus. So he asked them again, "Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him: I will therefore chastise Him, and let Him go." But instantly the people cried out loudly and more insistently, "Let Him be crucified."

Seeing that argument was useless, Pilate ordered the guards to take Jesus back into the "common hall," or outer court of the Prætorium, and to scourge Him preparatory to His execution. There Jesus was stripped and thrown to the ground or tied to a pillar in the sight of the multitude crowding the gate. Then the soldiers proceeded cruelly to scourge Jesus with the terrible Roman flagellum consisting of leather thongs to which were affixed metal spikes, jagged pieces of bone, and lumps of lead capable of flaying the bare skin of a victim to shreds.

When Jesus had been scourged almost to the point of exhaustion, the soldiers threw over His shoulders a discarded purple or scarlet cloak of one of the legionaries and "plaited a crown of thorns" from the flexible branches of a sharp thorny plant, which has now come to be known as *rhamnus spina Christi,* and pressed it onto His head until it drew streams of blood. Into Jesus' hands they thrust an elm flogging rod in imitation of a sceptre, and in mock homage they knelt before Him crying, "Hail, King of the Jews."

Throughout this terrible ordeal Jesus uttered no word of condemnation against His torturers. As prophecy had declared, "As a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth."

After the mocking and scourging, Jesus presented a pitiable appearance. Blood streamed down His face where the sharp thorns had pierced His brow and His body was gashed and lacerated by the barbs of the scourges. Thinking to arouse the pity of the crowds who were waiting to follow the soldiers to the place of execution, Pilate ordered Jesus to be set beside Barabbas in the entrance gate. Standing to one side he pointed to Jesus and said, "Behold the Man!" This declaration, in Latin "Ecce Homo," is perpetuated in the name given to the ancient arch over the Via Dolorosa. Pilate thought that the sight of Jesus would have softened the hardest hearts in the crowd, but at once the priests started to cry again, "Crucify Him, crucify Him," and the crowd echoed the fearful demand.

With a contemptuous wave of the hand Pilate cried, "Take ye Him, and crucify Him: for I find no fault in Him."

Jubilant that they had at last gained their object, the chief priests replied, "We have a law, and by our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God." Pilate was startled by the words. This was the first time he had heard this charge, and when the words "Son of God" fell on his ears he recalled his wife's dream. This must be what had troubled her, and the terrible fear came over him that the Man standing before him might be a god in human form.

Stopping the soldiers as they were about to lead Jesus away, Pilate took Jesus again into the judgment hall and asked Him anxiously, "Whence art Thou?" If Jesus had wished, He could have given Pilate such evidence of His divine nature that the governor would have been compelled to release Him. But He said nothing. Jesus had never used His supernatural power for His own benefit before, and He would not now use it to save Himself from death.

At his wits' end to know how to extricate himself from his terrible predicament, Pilate demanded, "Speakest Thou not unto me? knowest Thou not that I have power to crucify Thee, and have power to release Thee?"

Calmly Jesus replied, "Thou couldst have no power at all against Me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered Me unto thee hath the greater sin."

Conscience-stricken that Jesus should pronounce his guilt less than that of the Jews, Pilate was the more anxious to save Him, but now the patience of the chief priests and rulers was exhausted. As he began once more to plead for Jesus they cried, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar."

Pilate knew what they meant. If he did not put Jesus to death they would denounce him to Cæsar for allowing sedition against the Emperor to go unpunished. And he knew that he could never survive this charge. If it was a choice between his life and that of Jesus, Jesus must die. He must save his own life and position at all costs. So he ordered Jesus to be brought again to the gate. The protracted trial had been going on for three hours. Pilate was weary and the crowd was on the point of rioting. Seating himself on the tribunal, Pilate waved his hand toward Jesus and said ironically, "Behold your King!"

The Jews took the remark as an acknowledgment that Jesus was guilty of sedition and vociferously cried out, "Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him."

"Shall I crucify your King?" Pilate demanded in a final sarcasm. The chief priests answered, "We have no king but Cæsar."

In a last gesture of self-justification, Pilate ordered an attendant to bring a basin of water and set it before the judgment seat. Putting his hands into it he "washed [them] before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just Person: see ye to it." But though he went through the motions, no external washing could cleanse his guilty heart. If he had taken "much soap" and even "nitre," as Jeremiah once taunted Israel, he could not have cleansed away the stain of his sin. He had sacrificed justice to expediency, principle for self-interest, and in doing so had perpetrated "the greatest injustice in history."

But while Pilate sought vainly to rid himself of responsibility for the fate of Jesus, the chief priests and rulers arrogantly accepted full responsibility for their actions. "His blood," they said, "be on us, and on our children." Little did they realize the curse they were pronouncing upon themselves and upon their race. At that Pilate "willing to content the people" rose and gave the order for the release of Barabbas and shamefully "delivered Jesus to their will."

The Procurator returned to his chambers worn out by the struggle, but relieved that he had saved himself from denunciation by the Jews. His cruelly won security was, however, short lived. Four years later he ran into serious trouble when he sought to arrest a Samaritan patriot who had gathered his followers on Mount Gerizim and proclaimed himself Messiah. In dispersing the crowds many were brutally killed and great numbers of prisoners were later executed. The Samaritans protested to the Syrian legate, Vitellus, who deposed Pilate and sent him for trial to Rome. The Emperor Tiberius died before Pilate arrived, but he was banished to Vienne in Gaul by Caligula, and not long after is said to have died by his own hand.

This chapter is based on Matthew 27:15-31; John 18:39-19:16; Mark 15:6-19; Luke 23:13-25.

CHAPTER FORTY

The Way of Sorrow

IMMEDIATELY Pilate gave the order for the execution, Jesus was divested of the purple robe mockingly put on Him, and His own garments were given back to Him. Whether the crown of thorns was left on His head we cannot be sure, though in sacred art He is usually portrayed as wearing it to the end.

The officer of the guard then selected the execution party of four soldiers, probably Syrian mercenaries, under a Roman centurion, the bar of the cross was brought from the barracks stores, and Jesus was led away "bearing His cross."

Jesus had hinted to Nicodemus that the suffering Messiah would be "lifted up" for the salvation of men. Now this prophecy was to be fulfilled in the ghastly Roman punishment of crucifixion. Crucifixion was the most terrible death of ancient times. It is said to have been invented by the Persians on the grounds that the earth consecrated to Ormuzd was not to be defiled by executions. From them it was adopted by Alexander the Great and passed on to the Carthaginians, and finally to the Romans during the Punic wars. Cicero called it "the most cruel and frightful punishment" and Josephus said it was "the most wretched of all ways of dying."

The Romans used the terror of crucifixion to keep order in the subject provinces, as many as two thousand Jews at a time being crucified by Quintilius Varus, while Titus crucified five hundred a day during the last terrible siege of Jerusalem.

No Roman was degraded by crucifixion, its use as a punishment for civil offences being reserved for slaves; hence Tacitus' designation of it as the "slavish death penalty." This explains Paul's reference to the voluntary humiliation of Jesus, suffering "*even* the death of the cross." Significant it is, therefore, that this sign of ultimate humiliation should become the symbol of infinite love.

It was now the third hour of the Roman day, or nine o'clock in the morning. The two trials before Pilate, together with the brief visit to Herod, had taken nearly three hours.

With Jesus, as He set out along "the way of sorrow" to the place of execution, were two malefactors bearing their crosses. They may have been companions of Barabbas, and the cross which Jesus bore might, but for the fickleness of the crowd, have been on the shoulders of Barabbas himself. As the Scriptures had foretold, Jesus was "numbered with the transgressors" in His final suffering and death.

The law of Moses forbade punishment by death within the camp and prescribed a place of execution in some prominent place outside the camp "so that all the people shall fear." Naboth in the Old Testament was stoned at Ahab's order outside Samaria, and Stephen in the New Testament was hurried out of the city and stoned in the Kidron Valley. Jesus had similarly indicated in His parable of the wicked husbandmen, that the Son of the owner would be taken outside the vineyard and put to death.

From the Arch of "Ecce Homo," the monumental entrance to the fortress of Antonia, the procession proceeded along the road now called the Via Dolorosa, or "Way of Sorrow," then much wider than now, and descended in a westerly direction toward the road coming up the Tyropœon Valley along the west wall of the temple area.

When this road was reached we are not sure which way they turned, as the site of Calvary is not certainly known. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which encloses the site of Calvary and the tomb of Christ, as located by Queen Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, in the third century, is today *within* the wall of the Old City, and those who believe this to be the authentic site assert that in Christ's day the west wall of Jerusalem formed an angle at this point, turning east at Herod's Palace, near the present Jaffa Gate, and then north toward the Damascus Gate. This would leave the whole north-west corner of the present walled city outside the walls of Jesus' day, until enclosed by the third wall of Herod Agrippa, and would satisfy the scriptural requirement that Calvary was "without the gate."

However, there are many who do not accept the traditional location of Calvary, believing that the walls of the city in Jesus' day ran more or less along the line of the present wall. These locate Calvary some distance beyond the present north wall on an eminence to the east of the Damascus Road, not far from Jeremiah's Grotto, with the tomb of Christ in an ancient garden nearby. This spot is sometimes called Gordon's Calvary because he favoured this location when he visited the Holy Land. If this is the true site, then the Via Dolorosa must have turned north at the junction of the road up the Tyropœon, passed out of the city at the Damascus Gate, and continued along the Great North Road to the hill of Calvary or Golgotha. The geographical location of the cross, however, is really of little consequence. What matters is the event which was enacted there, and our own personal relation to it.

A great crowd followed Jesus and the soldiers, among them the chief priests, scribes, and elders, people from the city, and pilgrims who had come in for the Passover. The first mentioned were eager to see Him die, others went out of unhealthy curiosity, while still others followed sorrowing that an innocent Man should be sent to so terrible a death. Among the crowd also were the disciples and many of the women who had helped Jesus during His ministry. Mary of Bethany was there, together with Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary the mother of James the less.

As they "led Him away" it soon became evident that Jesus would not be able to carry even the bar of the cross up the steep road. Weak and exhausted from the scourging and ill treatment, He sank to the ground under the burden. Exasperated at the delay, the centurion looked around for someone whom he could press into service to get Jesus to the place of execution. The disciples could not have been far away, but none of them dared offer to help lest they should be denounced as accomplices, and perhaps even be put to death with Him.

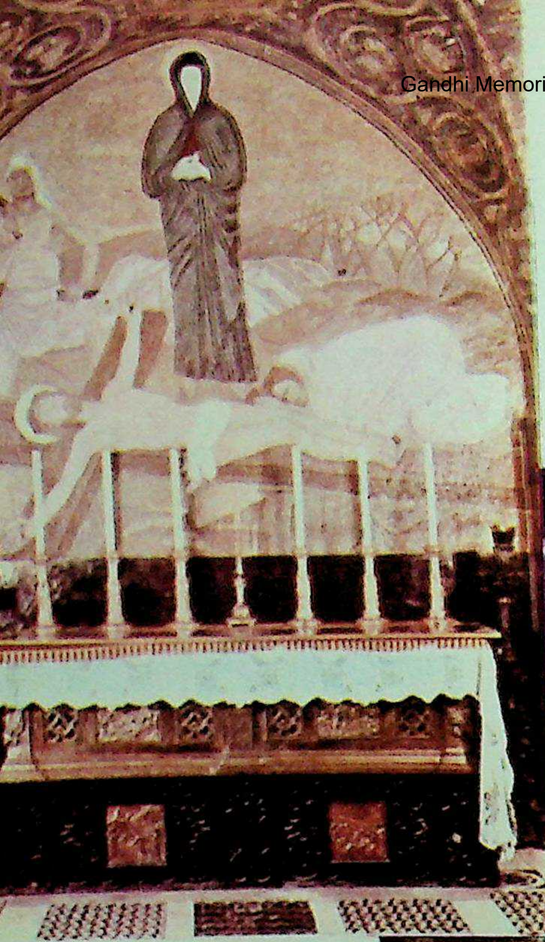
It happened, however, that just at that moment there came by "out of the country," where he was lodging during the Passover festival, "a man of Cyrene, Simon by name." Cyrene could have been Cyrenaica in North Africa, but was more probably Kyrenia or Cyprus, where there was a considerable Jewish colony. In Peter's congregation at Pentecost there were men of Cyrene. Stephen also disputed with Cyrenians, and one of the teachers in the Christian church which was later established in Antioch, was Lucius of Cyrene.

We are not told how Simon reacted to the service imposed on him. He may have been humiliated by the indignity, or he may have willingly helped out of pity for Jesus. But we do know that it changed his whole life, for Mark, in his gospel, mentions that Simon was the "father of Alexander and Rufus," evidently well known in the Christian community in after years. A certain Rufus is mentioned by Polycarp in his letter to the Philippians, and tradition has it that Alexander was martyred for his faith.

In bearing the cross "after Jesus," Simon not only found salvation for himself and his family, but he set an example to us, that we should take up our cross and "follow Him" in experience and service.

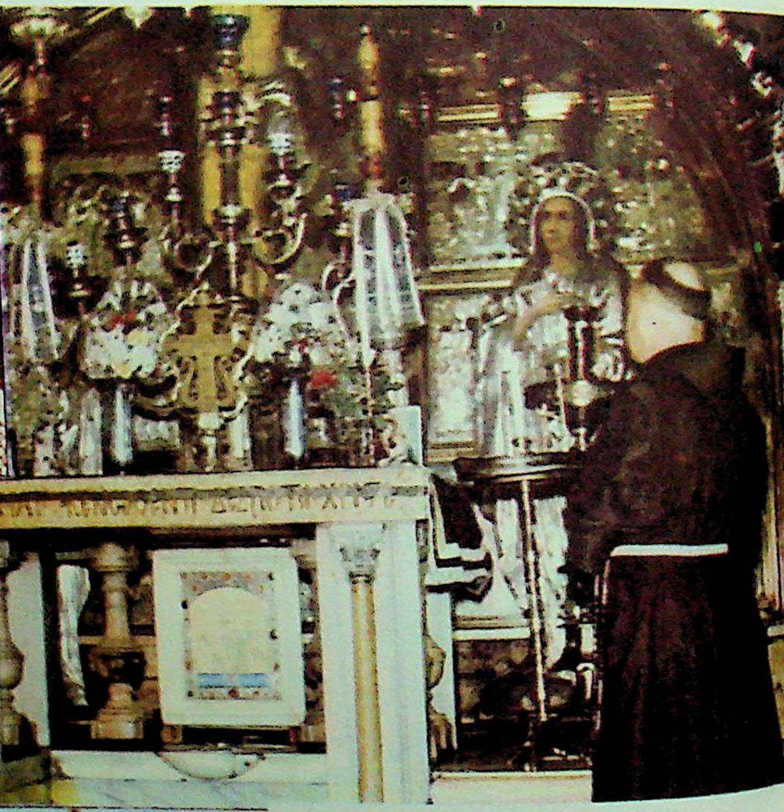
In the Talmud a vivid description is given of an execution procession. A herald went in front of the victim proclaiming his crime from a parchment charge sheet and demanding whether any desired to plead his innocence even at that late hour. Two scribes accompanied the prisoner seeking to extract from him a confession of his crime in order to mitigate the wrath of God against him. A representative of the Sanhedrin followed to certify that the sentence had been duly carried out. Whether all this was mounted for Jesus we are not told.

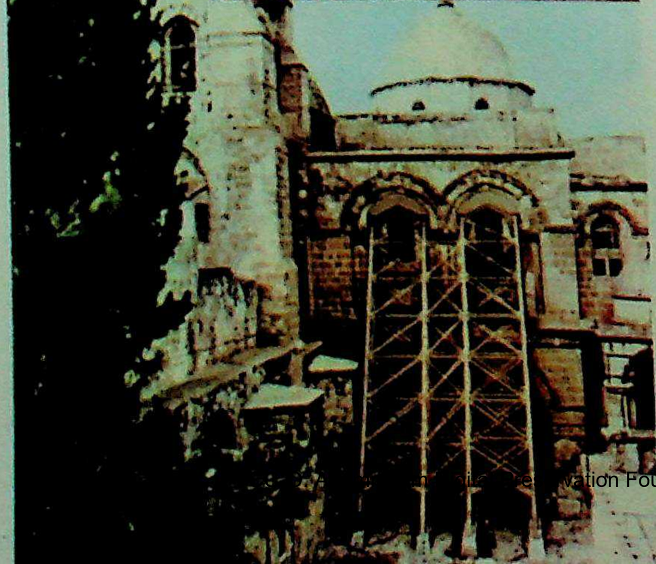
As Jesus moved slowly along the road, followed by Simon bearing the cross, He passed a group of grief-stricken women, and even in this dark hour of His agony He found time to pause and speak with them. "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me," He said, for in His sufferings He was sustained by "the joy that was set before Him." Instead they should weep for the terrible recompense which would overtake those who had rejected Him and were sending Him to the cross. "If they do these things in a green tree," He said, "what shall be done in the dry?" If Jesus, a green and fruitful branch, was cut down in His innocency, what would



LEFT
The Chapel of the Nailing, traditionally believed to be the place were Jesus was stripped and nailed to the cross.

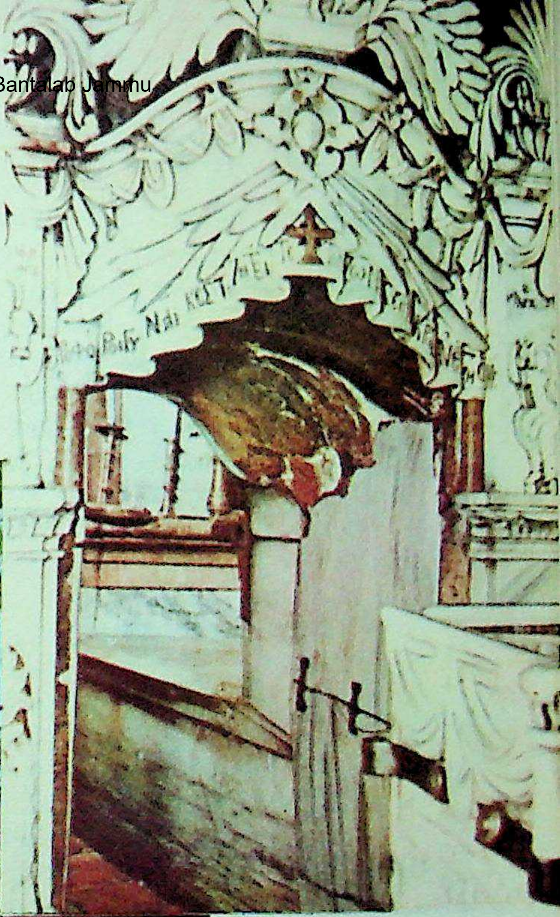
BELOW
The Chapel of the Cross, said to mark the spot where the three crosses of Calvary were raised.



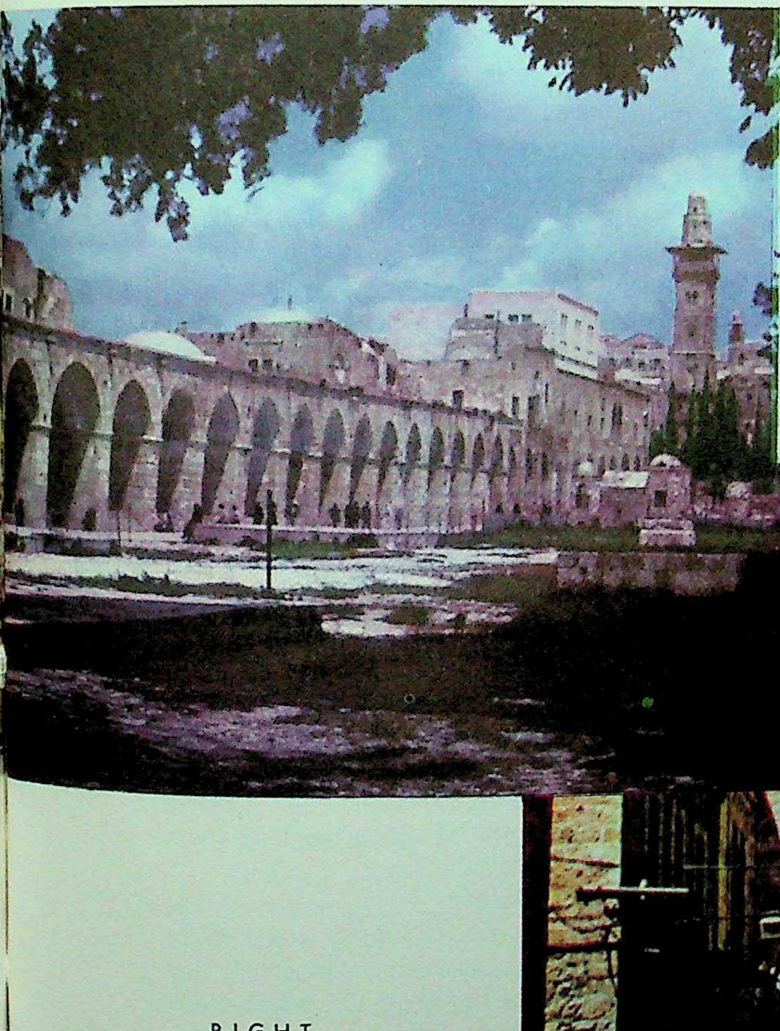


LEFT
The present entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre dates from the days of the Crusaders. For some years it has been reinforced by scaffolding, pending the carrying out of extensive repairs.

RIGHT
The supposed sepulchre of the Lord is enclosed in a marble edifice which rises beneath the great dome.



BELOW
The tower at the far end of the Temple area marks the site of the Judgment Hall of Pilate.



RIGHT
The "Ecce Homo" Arch was the monumental entrance to the fortress of Antonia where Jesus was brought before Pilate. Along the "Way of Sorrow" which leads from it, Jesus bore His cross to Calvary.

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become of the dead and withered tree of guilty Israel? If Jesus, who was guiltless, was so treated, what would "the end be of them that obey not the Gospel?"

At last the mournful procession reached "a place called . . . in the Hebrew Golgotha," meaning "the place of a skull." In Luke the corresponding Latin name is given, Calvaria or Calvary. The name may have been derived from the shape of the round-topped mound or knoll, or it may have been so designated because it was a common place of execution, littered with the grim evidences of innumerable past victims. In the side of the hill called Gordon's Calvary there are two great holes which give the appearance of a skull, and have been used to explain its name, but it is unlikely that this configuration goes back to the time of Christ. They were more likely the result of weathering and quarrying of a much later date. Whatever its origin, however, the name has a deep significance in the Bible story, for it was in the place of death that death was for ever cancelled for those who accept the merits of Christ's vicarious sacrifice.

It was a merciful custom, going back to very early times, to offer to criminals about to die an opiate or narcotic of gall or myrrh to dull their final agonies. This kindly act is mentioned in the book of Proverbs, and in the time of Christ a charitable society of wealthy ladies, according to the Talmud, had taken it upon themselves to render this service. When, therefore, Jesus and the thieves reached the place of execution they were offered "wine mingled with myrrh." The thieves eagerly drained the cups, but Jesus "would not drink." He still had a ministry to perform on the cross, and if He had accepted relief of this kind He would have been too insensible to have helped any as He hung there. In His last hour, therefore, He would take nothing that would prematurely terminate the saving work He had come to do, or separate Him from communion with God. With divine heroism, Jesus faced death conscious to the end.

On the hill of Calvary the soldiers proceeded to set up the crosses. There were four types of cross used in Roman times. The *crux simplex* was merely the pole of a wagon or chariot to which the victim was bound. The *crux summissa* had a cross bar placed on the top of an upright like a T. The *crux decussata* had the members placed diagonally like a St. Andrew's cross, while the *crux immissa* had the cross bar set in a mortise a little below the top of the upright. The last is generally regarded as the form of cross on which Jesus died.

The height of the cross varied, but normally the feet were not more than half the body height above the ground. It is unlikely that any block was used to support the feet, as is often portrayed in pictures of the cross, but a crutch may have been fixed between the thighs to support the weight of the body, which might otherwise have been torn away from the nails.

The upright beam, already on the site, was laid on the ground and the cross bar attached. Jesus was partially stripped, laid on the cross, and His hands were transfixed to the horizontal member by nails driven home with a wooden mallet. In representations of the crucifixion the wounds are usually shown in the palms of

Christ's hands, but in all probability it would be necessary for the nails to be put through the wrists to bear the weight of His body. The feet were then nailed separately to the upright or impaled with a single spike through the crossed limbs.

Usually this cruel procedure forced shrieks of pain from the lips of the victim, but through it all Jesus uttered no word of complaint. He only breathed a prayer to His Father for His tormentors. "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Jesus' first word from the cross offered mercy and grace to the soldiers who in ignorance obeyed the command of the centurion, but not to them only. It speaks forgiveness to all who have since realized their soul's need at the foot of the cross.

At the top of the upright beam the charge against Christ was affixed. Pilate had commanded to be written on it, "Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews," in the three languages of Palestine of that day—Aramaic, the language of the common people; Greek, the language of the Hellenistic world; and Latin, the official language of the Roman overlords, just as General Allenby, when he took Jerusalem from the Turks in 1917, issued his proclamation of occupation in Arabic, Hebrew, and English.

When the chief priests saw the inscription they remonstrated with Pilate, urging that it be changed to, "He said, I am King of the Jews," but Pilate refused to alter it, saying abruptly, "What I have written I have written." And so it remained, by a higher ordination than that of Pilate, a witness to His enemies that He reigned even from His cross, and one day would reign in glory as King of kings and Lord of lords; a witness, too, to all who thereafter would learn of the Saviour-King to the ends of the world and to the end of time.

When all was done, the cross, with its divine-human burden, was raised up by the soldiers and dropped with a sickening thud into the hole prepared for it, dreadfully tearing the hands and feet of Jesus as the cruel nails took the full weight of His body.

On either side of Jesus the crosses of the two other condemned men were set up and then, collecting the clothes stripped from the victims as the customary perquisites of their distasteful task, the soldiers proceeded to divide them before settling down for their final watch.

The poor garments of the two thieves were first shared out and then they came to the clothes of Jesus. His sandals, girdle, headgear, and outer tunic or cloak were divided, but when they came to the inner garment He had worn they saw that it was "woven from the top throughout" in one beautiful seamless piece, most likely by the loving hands of His mother. Feeling that it would be a shame to tear up so perfect a garment they decided to cast lots for it, and so yet another prophecy of His passion was fulfilled to the letter: "They parted My raiment among them, and for My vesture they did cast lots."

This chapter is based on Matthew 27:31-35; Mark 15:20-26; Luke 23:26-33; John 19:16-24.

CHAPTER FORTY-ONE

Obedient Unto Death

WHEN the soldiers sat down to watch at the cross they expected their vigil would be a long one; for though excruciatingly agonizing, crucifixion was a slow death. Sometimes the victims would linger on for two or three days before death ended their sufferings.

As Jesus hung upon the cross, His enemies vented their spite upon Him in insulting words. Forgetting their dignity as the leaders of the people, the chief priests and scribes and elders mocked Him, saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He be the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now, if He will save Him: for He said, I am the Son of God."

Had Jesus wished He could have freed Himself instantly and brought swift judgment on His tormentors. But then the whole sinful race would have been eternally lost. It was because He would not leave man to his fate that He did not come down. By a miraculous descent from the cross He could have manifested the greatness of His power, but by the miracle of His vicarious sacrifice He revealed the depths of His infinite love.

Led by the rulers, the crowds of idlers who thronged the busy road joined in the mocking and derision. The soldiers, too, who had taunted Jesus in Pilate's palace joined in the abuse, saying, "If Thou be the King of the Jews, save Thyself."

At first both the thieves also "which were crucified with Him, cast the same in His teeth," demanding in rage and despair, "If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us." One, however, to whom tradition has given the name of Dismas, as he watched the patient Sufferer from whose lips no word of vengeance or self-pity fell in all His agony, realized that he was in the presence of a power beyond human;

The cross was the final revelation of the malignity of sin and the crowning evidence of the redeeming love of God.

By CARL BLOCH

of One who, if He would not save him from physical death, could save him from eternal ruin. His heart was touched, and in true repentance he acknowledged Jesus as his Saviour.

Looking across at the other thief, who was still railing, he said, "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss."

Then turning his head toward Jesus on the central cross, he pleaded, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom." Probably the thief's conception of Messiah's kingdom was no different from the popular ideas of the Jews, but he did believe that though Jesus now hung on the cross, in some way he could not understand, Jesus would manifest His power and fulfil His destiny. Jesus honoured his imperfect faith. Oblivious of His own suffering He turned to him and said, "Today I say unto thee, thou shalt be with Me in paradise."

As the verse is punctuated in our Authorized Version it might be imagined —indeed it is commonly so interpreted—that Jesus assured the thief that He would return to His Father's home in heaven that very day, and that He would take the penitent thief with Him. But Jesus said nothing of the kind.

In harmony with the consistent teaching of the Bible, and as Paul later explained in one of his epistles, Jesus did not at His death "ascend" to heaven; He "descended first into the . . . earth," there to sleep the "sleep" of death until His resurrection. On the third day Jesus did not come back from heaven to meet His disciples; He came forth from the grave where He had been since His burial. Consequently, Jesus did not go to Paradise on the day of His death, and the thief obviously did not either.

What then did Jesus promise the penitent thief? All becomes clear when it is realized that there is nothing inspired about the punctuation of the Bible. This has been supplied by the translators according to their understanding of the meaning of Scripture, or in this case as a consequence of their misunderstanding of it. If they had placed the comma correctly after and not before the word "Today," they would have correctly rendered Jesus' words. What He said, using a common Old Testament form of emphasis, was not, "I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," but, "I say unto thee today, Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise." Jesus promised the penitent thief on that very day, the day of His crucifixion, that when He came into His kingdom—which He had explained many times before would be at His second coming—the repentant thief with all the saints would be raised immortal by "the voice of the Archangel and . . . the trump of God."

So while the impenitent thief died as he had lived, without hope, the cross of the penitent thief became a stepping stone to the Paradise of God. At the very point of death Jesus triumphed over Satan and snatched another soul from his clutches and from eternal destruction.

The story of the penitent thief provides us with a wonderful assurance that it is never too late this side of death to seek the mercy of God, who never turned a repentant sinner away. At the same time, the other thief provides a warning that to wait till the eleventh hour may be too late, for his heart was not softened by the sight of the dying Saviour, and for him repentance never came.

It was not long after Jesus had spoken His redeeming word to the penitent thief that He caught sight of His mother with the other Marys and His closest disciple John, standing at the foot of the cross. Concerned for her future care more than for the pain and anguish He was enduring, Jesus addressed His third utterance from the cross to her as He said gently, "Woman, behold thy son," and to John, "Behold thy mother." "And from that hour," the Record says, "that disciple took her unto his own home."

Tradition has it that when John left Palestine to care for the churches in Asia Minor, he took Mary with him and that she died at Ephesus at a great age. Another tradition, however, asserts that she was buried in a tomb in the Kidron Valley, near Jerusalem. Whatever the truth about her death, however, we do know that she was not translated body and soul to heaven to become co-mediatrix with Christ in the presence of God, as Rome has recently promulgated in her dogma of the Assumption of the Virgin. Wherever she was laid to rest, Mary still sleeps awaiting, with all the saints, resurrection to immortal life. She identified herself with the rest of humanity in confessing her own need of a Saviour, and believed with Paul that there is only "one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus."

When John had led the mother of Jesus away, the other Marys remained to watch and wait. As the end drew on, the physical agony of Jesus was intensified. The weight of His body dragged upon His lacerated hands, the stiffened muscles were tortured by cramp, the lungs and heart were engorged by the impaired circulation, the veins swelled, and a mounting fever added to His exhaustion. But through all His sufferings, Jesus uttered no word of complaint. The penitent thief, too, was quiet now and only the other thief still railed at his tormentors.

The sun rose higher in the sky and then, as it reached its zenith at the sixth hour, suddenly the noon-day light began to fade and in a few moments the darkness of night overshadowed all the land. It was not an eclipse, for at Passover the moon was always at the full. It can only be explained as a supernatural phenomenon by which God mercifully veiled from mortal sight the dying agonies of His Son. It symbolized, too, the darkness which covered the earth when the Light of the world was withdrawn.

With the darkness a deathlike silence fell upon all. The taunts and mockings died on the lips of the fear-stricken beholders. Many beat their breasts in terror and groped their way back to the city.

About the ninth hour, from the midst of the darkness the voice of Jesus was heard by those who still watched. "Eli, Eli, lama, sabachthani," He cried, which is to say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Hearing the cry some said, "Behold, He calleth Elias," for, according to the common belief, Elijah came to the help of those in dire distress. Others said,

"Let us see whether Elias will come to save Him." But it was not Elias for whom Jesus called. The cry which pierced the darkness came from His lips as He looked into the abyss of eternal separation from God for the sake of sinful man. In the garden an angel was sent by God to comfort Him after His fateful decision, but on the cross the face of God was hidden. Jesus' words were not so much a question, for He desired no release from the final sacrifice. Rather were they intended to provide a glimpse of the fearful fate from which man was to be saved by His taking upon Himself the curse of the world's sin. And the wonder of divine love is that, though it was in His power to turn back, He did not do so. Human wisdom can never hope to fathom the mystery of divine love, but in that cry we can perhaps dimly glimpse the miracle of the atonement.

For three hours the awesome darkness had persisted and then, at the ninth hour, it was dissipated as mysteriously as it had come, revealing Jesus on the point of death. From His lips, parched by mounting fever, the cry came, "I thirst."

By the side of the cross there was an earthenware vessel "full of vinegar," actually a kind of sour wine, with which the soldiers refreshed themselves during their vigil. One of them, taking pity on Him, picked up a stalk of hyssop, stuck a sponge on the end, and having soaked it in the wine, moistened Jesus' closed lips. This was not a stupefying drink like the wine mingled with myrrh which He had been offered earlier, and this time Jesus did not refuse it. Thus still another Scripture was fulfilled, "They gave Me vinegar to drink."

When Jesus had received the drink, His lips parted and in a "loud voice," heard by all who were standing near, He cried, "It is finished." To the Jews, blinded by prejudice, the death of Jesus was the end of an impostor. They believed that His claims had been proved hollow, that His teaching was overthrown, and His influence for ever destroyed. But for Jesus the cross was the culmination of His work on earth and the foundation and basis of the work which He was to take up in heaven at His resurrection.

The cross was the ultimate indictment of Satan and the exposure of the "lie" which, in his rebellion, he had opposed to the "truth" of God.

It was the final revelation of the malignity of sin and the manifestation of its inevitable consequences. It was the vindication of the holiness of the eternal law. It provided full satisfaction of the claims of divine justice. It was the last payment of the debt of sin.

It was the crowning evidence of the redeeming love of God in Christ; it testified that the basis of the atonement was fully provided, and that the way was opened by which man could be restored to fellowship with God.

It proclaimed that the battle with Satan was won, that his defeat was complete and his fate sealed.

From the cross, the body of Jesus was tenderly carried to Joseph's new tomb.
By CARL BLOCH

The work of the cross was a "finished" work; and as we look in faith upon the crucified Saviour, we cannot but echo the personal testimony of the apostle Paul, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Immediately after His momentous declaration, "It is finished," Jesus spoke His last words on the cross. To His Father He said, "Into Thy hands I commend My spirit." Whereupon His head fell limply upon His breast and "He gave up the ghost." Literally "He dismissed the spirit." The expression is significant. Jesus could have held on to the life which was inherently His. None could take it from Him. "I have power to lay it down," He said, and this He voluntarily and vicariously did as the price of human redemption. To His Father He committed the life that was His that He might give it freely to those who by faith claimed the merits of His sacrifice.

As Jesus died "the earth did quake, and the rocks rent," as if in protest at the divine tragedy. In the traditional rock of Calvary in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre a crack is shown some two yards long and a foot wide, but this does not in any way identify the spot, for it is actually of much earlier seismic origin, this region having been from ancient times an earthquake zone.

The shock ran through the nearby city graveyard and many of the gravestones were moved out of their places, revealing yawning caverns from which, after Christ's resurrection, "many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves . . . and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

In the temple the officiating priest was standing before the altar with hand uplifted to slay the lamb of the evening sacrifice. Another priest had thrown back the first veil and stood with censer raised before the altar of incense, when suddenly the inner "veil" of gold and purple embroidered linen at the entrance to the "most holy place" was "rent in twain from the top to the bottom."

The priest in the holy place dropped his censer, the knife fell from the hand of the priest at the altar, and the lamb ran from him and made its escape. The last type had met the divine Antitype on the cross, the mediation of the Levitical priesthood was ended, and a living way was opened direct to the mercy seat inviting all sinners, Jew and Gentile, by faith to "come boldly unto the Throne of grace." Sacrifice and oblation were now superseded by the shed blood of the true Lamb of God. The age of types and shadows was ended; the new age of Gospel reality had begun.

"And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned" trembling from the cross and from the temple to their homes.

The leaders of the Jews were not softened by the divine dignity of Jesus' death, or by its catastrophic accompaniments. Their closed minds and hearts still persuaded them that Jesus was an impostor who had earned His due recompense. But there were others among the priests and the people whose consciences were smitten by what they had seen, who in the darkness and tragedy of Calvary were drawn to the Saviour, and at Pentecost they made confession of their faith.

A work of grace was accomplished, too, in the heart of at least one of the soldiers who had carried out the sentence of death. For when they "saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly," and the centurion, to whom tradition has given the name Petronius, cried out, "Certainly this was a righteous Man . . . this was the Son of God." And he joined with Simon of Cyrene, the penitent thief, and the nameless multitude of priests and people who that day found "life in a look at the crucified One."

This chapter is based on Matthew 27:36-56; Mark 15:27-41; Luke 23:34-49; John 19:25-37.

Last at the cross, the devoted women were last to leave the tomb in which Jesus was laid.

CHAPTER FORTY-TWO

In Joseph's New Tomb

WHEN the Jewish leaders recovered their composure after the earthquake and the other calamities attending the death of Jesus, they realized that the "day of preparation" was nearing its end and that the Sabbath was drawing on. It was a rule that the bodies of executed criminals should never be left exposed to desecrate the Sabbath, and this was a particular Sabbath, being not only the weekly rest day, but also a "high" Sabbath of the Passover festival. So they went to Pilate and asked that the legs of the victims be broken to hasten death "that they might be taken away."

Permission was granted by Pilate, and the soldiers, who were just as anxious to get away, proceeded to break "the legs of the first and of the other which was crucified with Him."

When, however, they came to Jesus, they were amazed to find that "He was dead already." So another prophecy which specified that "a bone of Him shall not be broken," was fulfilled. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear "and forthwith came there out blood and water."

Many traditions have been built around the piercing of Christ's side. One claims that the blood was collected in a chalice and became known as the Holy Grail. Another asserts that the soldier who pierced Christ was called Longinus and that he too was converted at the foot of the cross and later died a martyr in Cappadocia. These traditions may be discounted, but the record itself is of deep significance. In the first place, the piercing of the heart of Jesus proved beyond all doubt that He really died. Sceptics have tried to explain away the resurrection of Jesus by asserting that He had only swooned and was in a coma when He was placed in the tomb. The spear thrust, however, proved conclusively that Jesus was dead when He was taken down from the cross.

There is also a profound significance in the fact that from the wound there poured "blood and water," for this mingled stream could only have flowed if the pleural cavity had been ruptured. This is known in medical practice to result from distension following intense mental suffering, and reveals the terrible agony which Christ endured on our behalf. Literally, as the Psalmist foretold, He died of a "broken heart."

When the disciples and the devout women who were waiting on the edge of the crowd saw that Jesus was dead, the terrible thought seized them that His body might be cast into the burning pits of Gehenna like that of any common criminal, but they did not know how to prevent this. Suddenly they were surprised to see two of the rulers approach the centurion and engage in earnest conversation with him. They did not know at this time that one of these was Nicodemus, the doctor of law who had visited Jesus by night, and that the other was Joseph of Arimathea.

Nicodemus had followed the ministry of Jesus with the deepest interest ever since his searching conversation with Him early in His Jerusalem ministry, and he had endeavoured to secure justice for Jesus whenever His name was discussed by the Sanhedrin, but he had never dared to come out openly as a disciple. When Nicodemus looked upon Jesus dying on the cross he was ashamed of his fearfulness and gave his heart fully to Him.

Joseph, his friend, was a rich and devout leader among the Jews and "an honourable counsellor" in the Sanhedrin. His home town is designated Arimathea, or Ramah, but as there were some seventy Ramahs in Israel we cannot precisely determine which one it was. Evidently he also had property in Jerusalem and most likely was a permanent resident there at this time.

Like Simeon and Anna, Joseph of Arimathea "waited for the kingdom of God" and, through the influence of Nicodemus, had also become a "secret disciple" of Jesus. With Nicodemus he followed the crowds to Calvary and there gave his heart to God.

In the zeal of their new-found faith the two rulers realized that there was now something which only they could do. They could save the body of Jesus from ignominy and give Him an honourable burial. So they spoke to the centurion, who himself was under conviction, and he readily agreed to take no action till they put their request to Pilate. Pilate could not understand why so eminent a Jew wished to espouse the cause of the crucified Jesus, but he at once granted the request. So Joseph returned to the cross with a roll of fine linen cloth, the best which could be bought, which he may have intended for the swathing of his own body at his death.

While Joseph was away interviewing Pilate, Nicodemus went into the city where he purchased about a hundred pound's weight (72 lb. avoirdupois) of a mixture of "myrrh and aloes." These were not intended primarily as embalming materials, though they would have a temporary preservative quality, but were rather a sweet-scented tribute to the dead, much as we buy flowers to place on the grave of departed loved ones.

With profound relief and gratitude, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, who had remained by the cross, watched the two rulers as they tenderly took the body of Jesus down and began to enfold it in the broad linen bandages, wrapping the spices in the folds. Realizing by their actions that these men must have loved Jesus dearly, the women came forward and made themselves known to Joseph and Nicodemus. Then they helped in the final preparations of the body for burial.

Meanwhile the soldiers had completed their task of dismantling the crosses, the bloodstained cross beams being unceremoniously thrown into a ditch or onto some nearby rubbish heap. More than two centuries later Queen Helena, mother of Constantine the Great, searching near the traditional site of Calvary, believed she had found the beam of Christ's cross, and erected over the spot a little chapel, later to be replaced by the great Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

We can honour Queen Helena for her Christian faith, and for influencing her son to accept Christianity and become the first Christian Emperor, but we cannot but regret the part she played in starting the wave of relic worship which swept Europe for centuries as a result of her alleged discovery of the "true cross." It does not really matter what happened to the cross after its work was done. The important thing is what happened on the cross and how we relate ourselves to that redemptive act.

When the temporary embalming of the body of Jesus was completed, Joseph and Nicodemus lifted it onto a bier and, with the women following, carried it to a garden or orchard belonging to Joseph, in which was a "new sepulchre" which he had had cut out of the rocky hillside as a family burial place, but in which no bodies had yet been laid.

The traditional sepulchre in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in its encasement of sculptured marble, certainly now bears no resemblance to an ancient rock tomb, but the so-called "Garden Tomb" near Gordon's Calvary shows very clearly what it must have been like. This comprises two chambers, an outer anteroom and an inner tomb chamber, the latter being about six feet by three feet. Its "newness" is attested by the fact that only one bench had been properly cut for the reception of a body. In front of the entrance doorway, just as in the Bible account, there is a rock groove along which the great millstone was rolled to close the tomb.

Reverently the body of Jesus was wrapped in an enveloping shroud, His arms were folded across His breast, His head was slightly raised on a stone pillow, and a napkin, a small square of linen, was laid over His face. Then returning through the outer chamber, the men removed the wedge holding the millstone back and rolled it across the entrance doorway. There Jesus, who had died in company with "the transgressors," was left to rest, as prophecy had foretold, "with the rich in His death."

The holy women remained awhile after the men had gone. They were last at the tomb as they had been last at the cross. Then they too returned to the city to prepare "spices and ointments" to complete the embalming of Jesus' body when the Sabbath was past.

According to Jewish law the washing and embalming of the bodies of the dead was regarded as a permissible duty even after the six trumpet blasts had announced the opening of the Sabbath. But as the rulers had made adequate provision for the temporary preservation of the body, the women were content to "rest" upon the Sabbath day, "according to the commandment," as they believed Jesus would have them do.

Yet while that Sabbath was a day of physical rest for the disciples, as it had always been, it was a day also of mental and spiritual anguish. They had never believed that Jesus could really die, and now that He had been laid lifeless in the tomb they were so overwhelmed that they entirely forgot His promise that He would rise again. For them that Sabbath was a day of unrelieved darkness and despair. On the morrow they would see to the final embalming of His body and then would seal the tomb. After that they would be left with precious memories, but no hope.

But though the disciples forgot Jesus' promise that He would rise, the chief priests and rulers did not. Of course, they did not believe that He would really rise from the dead, but they were apprehensive lest His disciples should remove the body and hide it, and then declare that Jesus had risen, in an attempt to justify their faith and perpetuate the sect He had founded. So toward sunset on the Sabbath they went again to Pilate.

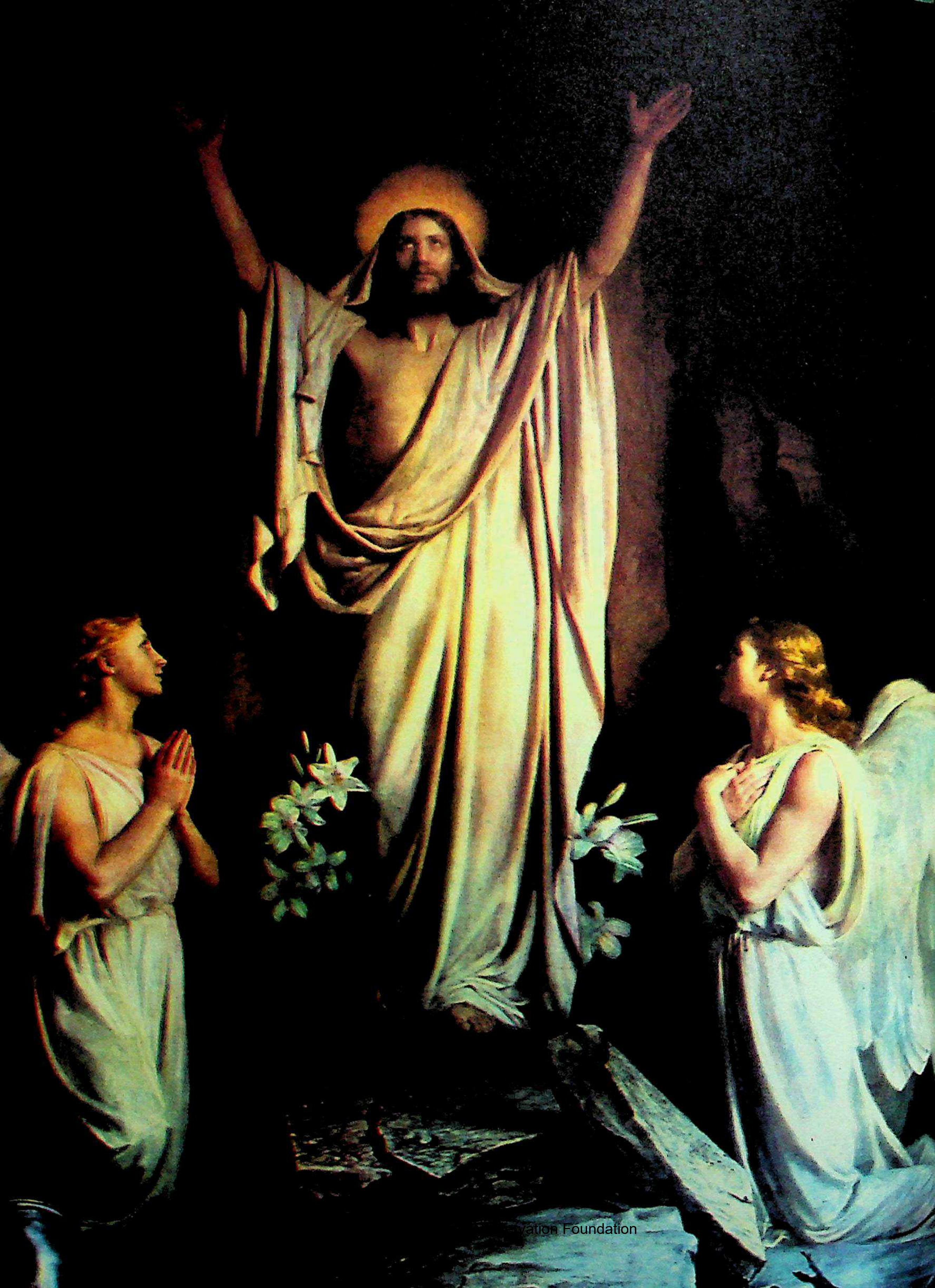
"Sir," they said, when they were granted audience, "we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first."

But Pilate was not disposed to assume any further responsibility in the case. It had already given him enough worry and he did not want to get involved further, so he said to the priests and rulers, "Ye have a watch," meaning the soldiers who had been used in connection with Jesus' arrest and execution: "go your way, make it as sure as ye can."

So the rulers went "and made the sepulchre sure," fastening cords across the stone and sealing them so that the stone could not be tampered with. Then "in the end of the Sabbath" they set "a watch" to make sure that no-one came near during the night.

Little did they realize that all their elaborate precautions to make the sepulchre "sure" against human interference, would, in a few hours, provide "sure" proof of the supernatural character of Christ's glorious resurrection.

This chapter is based on Matthew 27:57-66; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.



Jammu

CHAPTER FORTY-THREE

The Broken Seal

WHEN the chief priests and rulers left the tomb of Jesus as the sun declined over the western hills, they felt confident that they had disposed once and for all of the movement He had started. The sepulchre had been made "sure" by the affixing of the governor's seal, and the strong guard which had been set excluded any possibility of the disciples attempting to remove the body and then proclaiming that their Master was risen.

From dusk until nine o'clock the soldiers in the first watch did their spell of duty and were relieved. The second watch followed on until midnight and then the third watch took up their posts. Perhaps they were changed at three o'clock in the morning before anything happened. Luke says it was "very early in the morning" and Matthew designates the fateful moment as "as it began to dawn." It would therefore seem that it was about four o'clock, just before the first glow of morning light, that there was a crash of thunder, the earth shook as it had done at the crucifixion, and a mighty angel in glittering white raiment descended from heaven, scattering the unseen hosts of evil angels who sought to bar his passage, and stood before the tomb. As his hand touched the great stone in front of the entrance it rolled away as if it had been a pebble, and in a loud voice he bade Jesus, in His Father's name, to come forth.

Jesus had said before His death that He had power to lay down His life and power to take it again, and at His Father's call He broke the bands of death and stepped forth from the tomb.

We are not told the name of the angel to whom this momentous commission was given, but one cannot but believe that it was again the angel Gabriel. To him was given the honour of announcing the birth of John the Baptist to his parents

From the tomb, Jesus came forth in all the majesty of His heavenly glory.
By CARL BLOCH

and the birth of Jesus to Mary. If it was he also who ministered to Jesus after His temptation in the wilderness and who comforted Him in Gethsemane, it would indeed have been appropriate if he were sent to roll away the stone and call Jesus from the tomb.

It may seem strange that the Scriptures draw a veil over the actual moment when Jesus came forth Conqueror of death. Perhaps the scene was too sacred for mortal eyes to behold, or too wonderful for human language to describe. So it is left to the eye of faith to glimpse the stupendous sight as the grave-clothes fell away from the body of Jesus and He rose in all the majesty of His heavenly glory. Before Him the angel bent low in worship and the Roman guard, trembling with terror, fell at their posts in a death-like faint.

When the soldiers had recovered from the shock, Jesus and the angel had gone and all there was to recall what had taken place was the open tomb, which yawned dark in the flickering light of the torches planted in rock niches around.

The centurion in charge picked up a torch and staggered to the entrance of the tomb, followed by the rest of the guard, and to their consternation and horror they saw that it was empty. Fearfully he began to wonder what report he could take back to his superior officers to excuse his failure to keep the tomb. As there was no purpose in maintaining the guard around an open and empty tomb, the centurion led his men back to the barracks with the intention of reporting the alarming incident to Pilate. Word, however, soon reached the chief priests and rulers, who had the soldiers brought first into their presence. The officer of the guard felt that their safety lay in telling the whole truth, for even Pilate could not accuse them of dereliction of duty in the face of supernatural forces. But the high priest realized that if such a story got around it would confirm the validity of Christ's claim and the people would turn on them for crucifying a holy prophet, if not Messiah Himself.

So, asking the soldiers to wait until he had consulted the Sanhedrin, the high priest quickly summoned as many as he could gather and put the disturbing report before them. After a short session the soldiers were called in and were offered "large money" to say that the disciples of Jesus "came by night, and stole Him away" while they slept. A few days before, these priests had used money from the temple funds to pay the betrayer of Jesus, and doubtless it was from the same source that they now bribed the Roman soldiers to suppress the story they had brought. With their offer they assured the centurion that if the matter came to the notice of Pilate, and they were faced with the possibility of trial and perhaps execution for sleeping on watch, they would "persuade him, and secure" their safety.

The captain of the guard discussed the matter with the soldiers. The "large money" was certainly not to be set aside lightly, and if the priests could "square" Pilate they would be in no danger of punishment. "So they took the money, and did as they were taught." And so authoritatively was the story put over to the people that Matthew reports that, when he was writing his gospel, around A.D. 60

or 70, it was still "commonly reported among the Jews" in order to bring discredit on the Christian church.

Examining the facts as they are recorded for us in the gospel narratives, however, we can see that the efforts of the Jews to cover up the evidence of the resurrection have only served to make more sure the central truth of the Christian Gospel.

The piercing of Jesus' side as He hung on the cross made it absolutely certain that Jesus was dead when He was laid in the tomb. The suggestion of some modern critics that Jesus was only in a coma when He was taken to the sepulchre, never occurred to the priests, because they had made absolutely certain that He was dead.

The sealing of the tomb and the setting of a strong guard likewise, for all the story they put out, really excluded the possibility that the disciples, with nothing more than a few knives, could have forced their way to the tomb and absconded with the body.

The idea that the disciples could have got the body away while the guard were all asleep is also foolish in the extreme. For though at any hour of the night the guards off duty would have been asleep, it is inconceivable that all the watch on duty could have decided simultaneously to take a nap because everything was quiet. And if by some strange chance this could have happened, how could the soldiers possibly have known that the disciples came while they slept? When they woke up they would see that the tomb was open and empty, but they could not really tell whether the body had been stolen or whether Jesus had risen as He said He would. Moreover, the disciples could hardly have opened the tomb and got away with the body without waking someone.

Then again, if the story of the soldiers sleeping on watch had been true, as the priests asserted, surely their best policy would have been to denounce them to Pilate and have them put to death. Then they could have put out the story that, in spite of all the precautions they had taken against fraud, their efforts had been frustrated by a neglectful Roman guard. The fact that they did not avail themselves of this wonderful opportunity of clearing themselves was because if they had tried it the soldiers would have exposed it as a dastardly lie.

Finally, if the theft story was true, why did not the priests bend every energy to find out where the body was and produce it as conclusive evidence of the fraud? That they never even instituted a search shows that the whole story was a concocted lie. The only reason they were able to get it over was because it was corroborated by the soldiers and had been accepted by Pilate.

To all, however, who examine the facts with an unbiased mind it is clear that the priests were caught in their own craftiness and succeeded only in providing conclusive evidence that Jesus did actually rise from the dead. Once again, therefore, the "wrath of man" redounded to the "praise" of God.

This chapter is based on Matthew 28:2-4, 11-15.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOUR

He Is Risen

WHILE the priests and soldiers were concocting the fraudulent story by which they hoped to explain away the resurrection, Jesus was giving decisive evidence to His followers of His triumph over death.

When Mary Magdalene and the other women left the tomb late on Friday they had agreed to meet on the morning of the first day to complete the work of embalming Jesus' body. Mary doubtless went home to Bethany, while the other women were probably lodging in Jerusalem during the Passover.

On Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary made her way over the Mount of Olives to the tomb in the garden, and though she had the greatest distance to travel, she was the first to arrive. The time was about five o'clock.

As soon as she got near enough, she was startled to see that the stone had been moved away and the cave-like entrance to the tomb yawned wide. Not knowing anything about the setting of the guard, the dreadful thought crossed her mind that the enemies of Jesus, determined to undo the honour that Joseph had given to His body, had taken it away and cast it, like that of any criminal, onto the refuse heaps of the Hinnom Valley. Without even looking into the tomb, therefore, Mary turned and ran to tell Simon Peter and John. When she found them she explained breathlessly, "They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid Him."

It was not long after Mary had rushed from the tomb that the other women, including Mary the mother of James, Salome, and Joanna, arrived with the embalming spices which they had prepared before sundown on Friday. Like Mary they knew nothing about the setting of the watch so that the possibility of their not being allowed access to the tomb did not occur to them. What worried them, as they drew near, was the great stone which had been rolled in front of the entrance. "Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the sepulchre?" they said one to another.

Hoping that they would find someone around to help them they went on, and when they got there, they saw to their surprise that the stone had already been rolled away.

Mary had been so startled at the sight that she had run off without investigating further, but when they went up to the opening and looked in they saw an angel having the appearance of "a young man . . . clothed in a long white garment" sitting on the right side of the antechamber, and they were afraid.

At once the angel reassured them. "Be not affrighted," he said. "Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: He is risen; He is not here." And in his tone there was a gentle reproach that they, like the other disciples, had forgotten His oft-repeated promise.

"Remember," he went on, "how He spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again." As the angel spoke, it all came back to them and "they remembered His words."

"Come," said the angel as he saw a look of amazement overspread their faces, "see the place where the Lord lay." At the angel's bidding they looked into the inner chamber and saw another angel sitting on the bench where Jesus had lain, but His body was nowhere to be seen.

When the women came out of the tomb they "bowed down their faces to the earth" before the two angels. Then the first angel spoke again. "Go your way," he said, "tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said to you." How gracious it was that Jesus should have commissioned the angels to mention Peter particularly by name. He knew that Peter's repentance was sincere and He still had a great work for him to do. So in His first message to His followers, Jesus had a special word for Peter. Later in the day He was to give Peter personal assurance of forgiveness and reinstatement by revealing Himself to him first of all His disciples. Trembling and amazed at what they had seen and heard, the women hurried off to tell the wonderful tidings to the disciples.

Meanwhile, Mary had found Peter and John, who, fearing that she must be suffering from some hallucination due to her overwrought state, felt they should go along to see for themselves. They set off together, probably about half-past six, but John, being younger and more fleet of foot, outstripped Peter and reached the tomb first. There he found the stone rolled away and the tomb open just as Mary had said.

By this time Peter had come up. Impulsive as ever, he did not stay on the threshold but went straight into the antechamber and looked through into the inner tomb, where he saw that the niche where the body of Jesus had been placed was empty. He noticed something more. The linen bands in which the body had been swathed were folded up neatly and placed at one end of the bench, while the napkin which had covered His face had been folded and placed a little distance away by itself.

At once he called John to come and look. Instinctively both realized that this could not be the work of either friends or enemies of Jesus. If anyone had taken the body away to put it in another sepulchre they would certainly not have unwrapped it and taken it away naked. And no enemy who had intended to cast Jesus' body into the death pits of Hinnom would have folded the grave clothes tidily before making off with it. To Peter it was a mystery and he departed "wondering in himself at that which was come to pass." But John "saw and believed." To him the only explanation was that Jesus must have risen as He said He would.

No sooner had Peter and John hurried off to tell the other disciples, than Mary, who had followed after them, came again to the garden tomb. It was now about seven o'clock. This time she went up to the sepulchre, still silently weeping at the disappearance of her Lord, and as she stooped to look in she saw the two angels who had spoken to the other women a little while before. They had purposely not shown themselves to Peter and John, but now they were sitting "the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain."

As Mary knew nothing of their conversation with the other women, and still believed that the body of Jesus had been taken away, when the angels asked her, "Why weepest thou?" she replied, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Before the angels could reply Mary heard a step behind her, and turning, she saw a Figure, who repeated the angel's question, "Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

Whether it was the darkness of the morning or the fact that her eyes were blinded by tears, or whether it was that her eyes had been made "holden," she took the questioner to be Joseph's night-watchman, employed to look after the orchard. Thinking that, as he had been there all night, he might know what had become of Jesus, Mary asked, "Sir, if thou have borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away."

Then from the lips of the supposed gardener came the word "Mary" in a voice which she instantly recognized as that of Jesus.

"Rabboni [my honoured Master]," was all that she could say as she fell to the ground, reaching out her hands to embrace His feet.

But Jesus restrained her. "Touch Me not," He said; "for I am not yet ascended to My Father: but go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God." In passing on Jesus' first message to the other women the angel had referred to them as His "disciples," but now in Jesus' further word through Mary He called them by a name more endearing than any He had yet used. In spite of their disloyalty and cowardice He regarded them now not merely as His "servants" or His "friends," but as His "brethren."

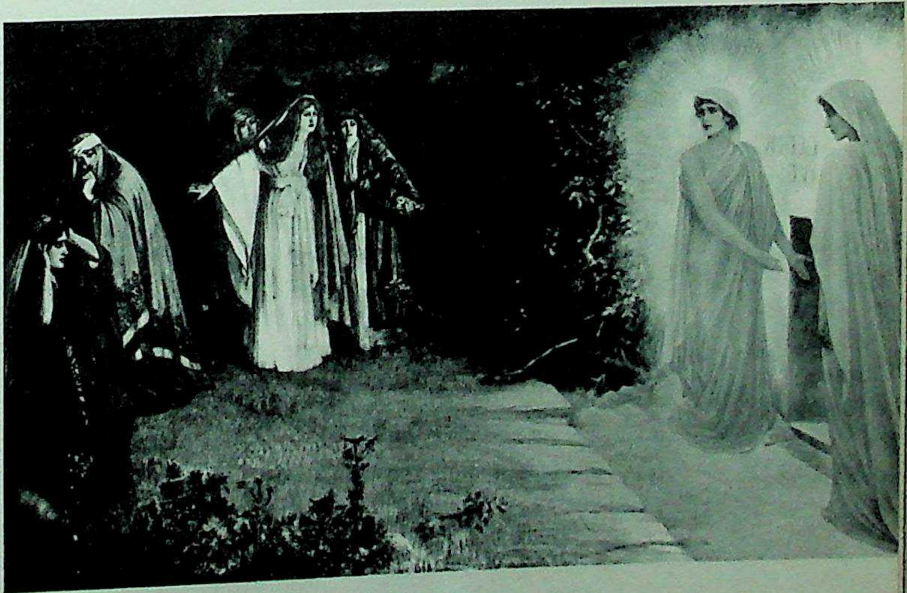
Shortly after Jesus had spoken to Mary He rewarded the faith and devotion of the other women by appearing to them also as they were on their way back to the city. "All hail," He said to them, and with joy they fell before Him, clasping His feet in worship.

That Jesus should just a little while before have restrained Mary from touching Him and yet now He allowed these women to embrace His feet, indicates that in the interval Jesus had ascended to His Father for the acceptance of His sacrifice, and returned. No sooner had Jesus received the worship of the women than He again disappeared.

Hurrying on their way the women soon reached the house where the disciples were lodging and found Mary there, as well as Peter and John. Excitedly they compared notes as to what each had seen and heard. Mary and the other women told how they had seen the angels at the tomb and learned that Jesus was risen, and then had actually seen Him. For confirmation the disciples turned to Peter and John. Had they seen the angels? Had they seen Jesus? But they had to admit that neither had actually seen the angels or Christ.

The disciples were torn between hope that the report of the women was true and the fear that, in their agitated state, they had suffered some hallucination. They wanted to believe, but they could not rid themselves of their doubts. Until they had further evidence, therefore, they could not accept the women's story. "Their words seemed to them as idle tales [lit., like nonsense], and they believed them not." So the matter rested and the perplexed disciples waited for further news as to what had become of Jesus.

This chapter is based on Matthew 28:1, 5-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18.



Amazed at what they had seen, the women hurried off to tell the wonderful tidings to the disciples.

CHAPTER FORTY-FIVE

On the Emmaus Road

SINCE the women had reported their meeting with the angels at the tomb, and subsequently with Jesus Himself, there had been no further news of the risen Lord. By the early afternoon, some of the believers, who had been waiting with the disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem for confirmation of the women's story, decided to return to their homes. Among these were two who lived in Emmaus. One was called Cleopas, which was probably short for Cleopatras. The name of the other is not given, but as they evidently lived together, they may have been brothers or near relatives.

All we know of the location of Emmaus from the Bible is that it was about sixty furlongs, or rather less than eight miles, from Jerusalem, but it is generally believed that it lay on the road descending through the foothills of Judea toward the coastal plain. Qubeibeh is exactly the right distance and is the most likely site.

As the two men went down the Lydda road between vine-clad hills they talked of the events of the day. Like the other disciples they wanted to believe, but could not bring themselves to accept the unsupported story of the women, and it was as they were trying to reach some conclusion about the matter that a Stranger caught up with them.

The fact that they did not recognize Him as Jesus, even after walking with Him all the way to Emmaus, was because their eyes were deliberately "holden," as Mary's had been earlier. They assumed that He was a Passover pilgrim going home, and though they did not feel particularly sociable, they walked along with Him.

Jesus was grieved at their discouragement and sorrow, and would have liked to reveal Himself at once to them, but He desired that they should come to a realization of His resurrection through faith in the promises of Scripture rather than by a miraculous revelation of Himself. So He opened the conversation by kindly

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As the Stranger blessed their simple meal, the two disciples suddenly realized that it was Jesus.
By CARL BLOCH

asking them why they were so cast down. "What manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?" He said.

The two disciples were surprised at the question, for if He came from the Passover, as they imagined, He should have known of the tragic happenings of the past few days, and have guessed why they were so solemn.

"Art Thou only a stranger in Jerusalem," Cleopas asked, "and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?"

"What things?" Jesus asked, feigning not to know what they were referring to.

The disciples answered, "Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him."

Their description of Jesus is significant, for it shows that they still believed He was a "prophet," though they had "trusted" that He might have been the King-Messiah who was to have redeemed Israel from the Roman yoke.

The only ray of hope concerning His Messiahship, they said, was that He had said that He would rise "the third day" and that "certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre; and when they found not His body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive." Furthermore, "certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found it even so as the women had said." But, they added sceptically, "Him they saw not." They had not entirely abandoned hope, but they still could not accept the unsupported testimony of the women.

Jesus let the disciples finish their story, and then He began to direct their attention to the Scriptures which should have been their stay in this crisis hour.

"O fools," He said, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: ought not [was it not necessary for] Christ to have suffered these things," in order that He might "enter into His glory," first as our Mediator and High Priest, and finally as the eternal King? Did not all type and prophecy declare that "without shedding of blood" there could be "no remission"? "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself."

The two disciples were amazed as Jesus clearly distinguished the prophecies of the suffering Messiah from the prophecies of His "glory," and showed how the former had been perfectly fulfilled in all that had happened in recent days. Doubtless He referred to the prophecy to our first parents in Eden of the bruising of the "heel" of the Seed, the command to Abraham to offer up his only son Isaac, the smitten rock and the upraised serpent in the wilderness, the sacrifices of the sanctuary service, and Christ's predictions of His sufferings in the Psalms and in Isaiah. Never had they seen these scriptures so clearly before, and gradually the conclusion began to force itself upon their minds, that if Jesus had fulfilled the prophecies of the suffering Messiah, the prophecies of His resurrection "must needs" have been fulfilled also. But still the perplexing problem held them back from complete faith, Why had Jesus shown Himself only to the women? If He had really risen, surely He would have shown Himself to His closest disciples, but as yet none of them had seen Him. Where was He?

By this time the travellers had reached the village of Emmaus and had stopped at the door of the house where Cleopas and his companion lived. Jesus, still unrecognized by them, made as if to take His leave and go on farther, but the desire to learn more from this wonderful Bible Teacher impelled them to invite Him to stay the night with them. "Abide with us," they insisted: "for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent." So Jesus, who will never force Himself upon anyone, but is always prepared to enter the hearts and lives of those who invite Him, "went in to tarry with them."

They were hungry after their long walk, and as soon as a meal had been spread they sat down, or rather reclined, at the table. It was customary in those days, as it still is in the East, to invite the guest of honour to preside over the table, and so the disciples requested Jesus to ask a blessing and distribute the simple fare.

At their invitation Jesus "took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them." As He carried out the functions of host, the disciples noticed that their guest broke the bread just like Jesus used to do; He lifted His hands in blessing just like Jesus, and then, suddenly, as they looked at the upraised palms, they saw the nail prints. At once the truth came to them. It was Jesus. But as they rose to worship Him "He vanished out of their sight."

For a moment they were speechless at the realization that it was their dear Master Himself who had walked and talked with them all the way home. Then they began to think back and wonder why they had not recognized Him before.

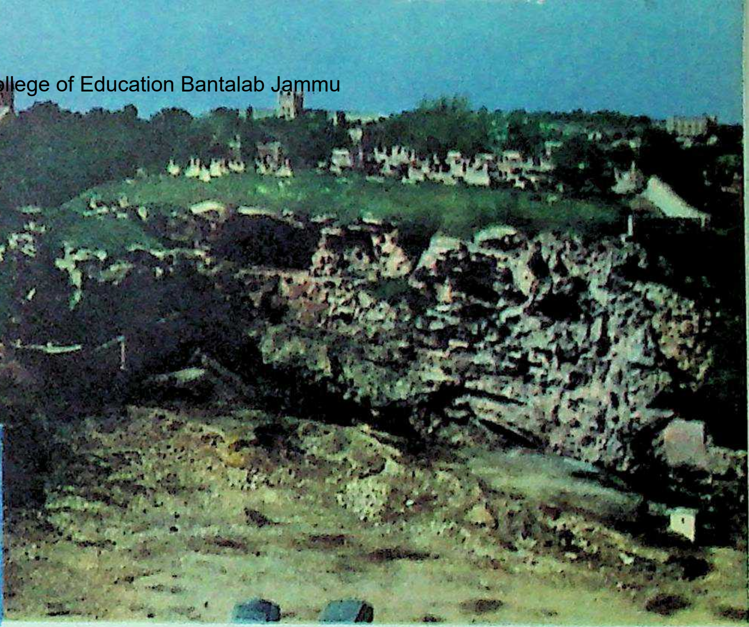
"Did not our heart burn within us," they said, "while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?" They might have known that no-one could have explained the Scriptures like that but Jesus Himself. No-one could have aroused such joy, such hope in their hearts as Jesus.

Thrilled that they had at last seen and talked with the risen Christ, their one desire was to get back to Jerusalem as quickly as possible and tell their brethren that the women were right and that Jesus was indeed alive from the dead.

Leaving their meal untasted, "they rose up the same hour" and set off immediately up the hilly road to Jerusalem. They may have walked or they may have taken donkeys for speed, in which case they could have made the journey in two hours, say by half-past eight.

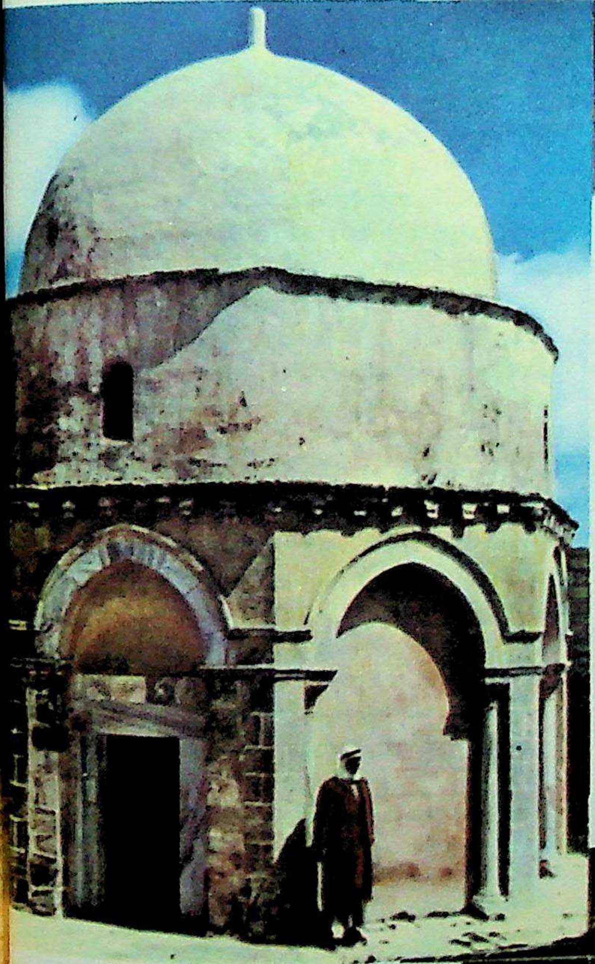
Through the Jaffa Gate they hurried in the darkness. Passing the palace of Herod they made their way along the narrow street to the house on Mount Zion where the disciples were lodging. The door had been barred "for fear" of molestation by the rulers of the Jews, but at their specially arranged knock they were at once admitted. In the room were ten of the disciples and others of the company of believers who had remained with them.

OPPOSITE
The Risen Christ.
By CARL BLOCH

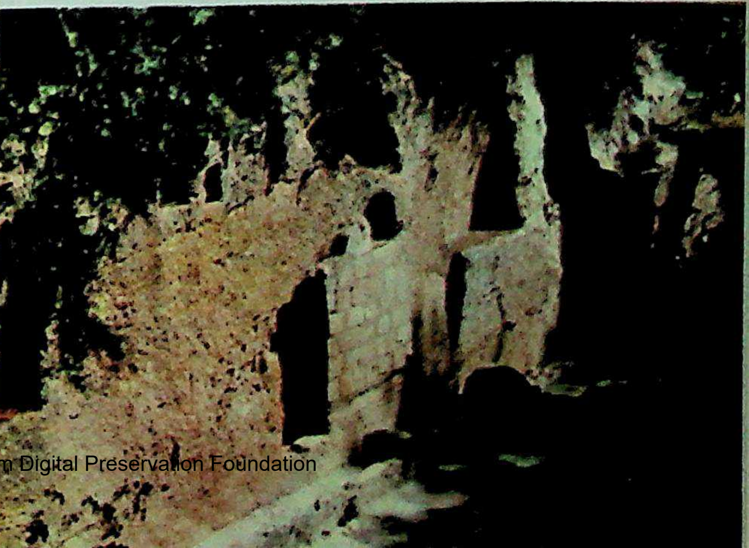


ABOVE
Many who do not accept the traditional site of Calvary and the Holy Sepulchre believe this hill to be the true place of the cross. It is often called "Gordon's Calvary."

BELOW
The Garden Tomb, near Gordon's Calvary, gives a much better idea of the rock vault in which the body of Jesus was laid than the ornate edifice in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.



ABOVE
Three sites are pointed out on the summit of the Mount of Olives as the place of the ascension. Most favoured is that on which the Chapel of the Ascension stands.



Before they were able to speak, the disciples excitedly told them that the testimony of the women had been confirmed that afternoon after they left. "The Lord is risen indeed," they said, "and hath appeared to Simon." At this Cleopas and his companion told their experience of how Jesus had met them "in the way," and how they had not recognized Him until He broke bread in their home at Emmaus.

Suddenly, as they talked excitedly together, "Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you."

The appearance of Jesus so startled the believers that, although a moment before they had been assuring one another that Jesus was alive, when He actually appeared in their midst they could not believe their eyes. Supposing that it was a "spirit" they were "terrified and affrighted."

Gently Jesus assured them that it was really He. "Why are ye troubled? and why do thoughts [of doubt] arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have."

As they looked they saw the undeniable evidence of His pierced hands and feet. Advancing toward Him they touched His garments and embraced His feet. The evidence of seeing, hearing, and touching convinced them at last that it was really Jesus.

To finally assure His disciples that He was no phantom, Jesus said to them, "Have ye here any meat?" Quickly they set simple food on the table, "a piece of a broiled fish, and of an honeycomb. And He took it and did eat before them."

"Then," says the Record, "were the disciples glad." Rapturous joy swept away their last doubts. John must have recalled this wonderful moment when he began his first epistle, "That which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the Word of Life; . . . declare we unto you."

Convinced now that it was Jesus Himself who had come back to them, they gathered round Him as He sat at the table and He began to remind them of all He told them before His death.

"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning Me." And He "opened . . . their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures."

"Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer," Jesus explained, "and to rise from the dead the third day."

Gently He "upbraided" His disciples for their "unbelief and hardness of heart, because they believed not them which had seen Him after He was risen."

When Jesus had shown His disciples the significance of His atoning death, He went on to set before them the task which He was about to place in their hands.

"Ye are witnesses of these things," He said, and "as My Father sent Me, even so send I you." From then on, He told them, it would be their responsibility to proclaim to the world the good news of "repentance and remission of sins . . . in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

Not yet, however, were the disciples ready to embark on their great missionary task. First they needed to be empowered by the promised gift of the Spirit.

"Behold," He said, "I send the promise of My Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high."

As an earnest of this full outpouring of the Spirit, "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost," and then He vanished from their sight.

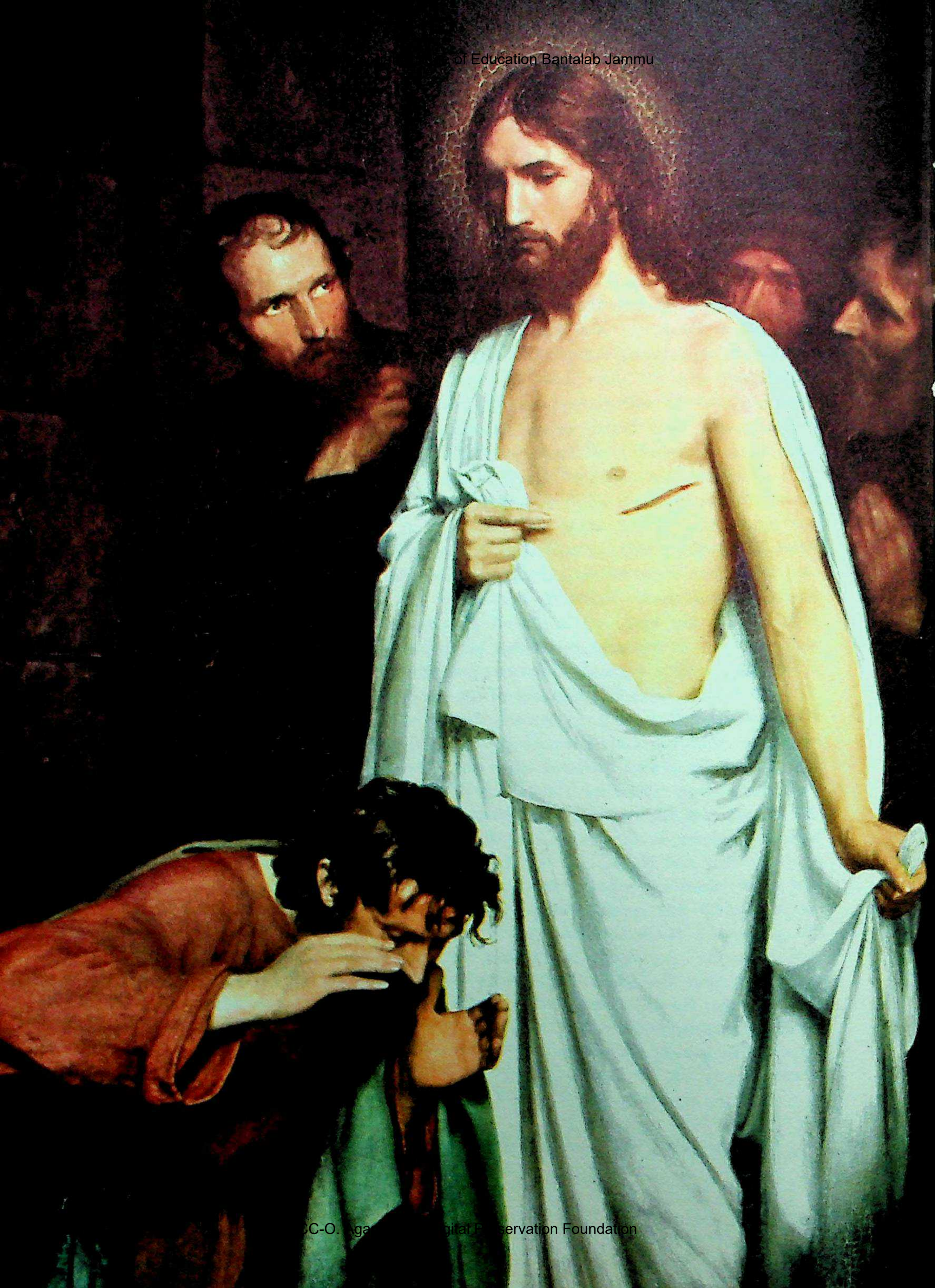
Far into the night after Jesus had left, the disciples talked of the events of the day, and their hearts welled up with the new joy which had come to them through the revelation of their risen Lord.

This miraculous change in the disciples, which was to astonish the people of Jerusalem in the days which followed, provides the final evidence of the truth of the resurrection. If the whole story had been an invention or fraud, it could hardly have bound the poor, scattered, and discouraged disciples into a united fellowship, and kindled in their hearts a burden to carry the message of a crucified and risen Saviour to the world. Certainly they would not have been prepared to endure the hardships of the long and dangerous journeys it entailed, to face persecution and suffering, and at last, almost without exception, to die a martyr's death for a lie. Clearly the only explanation of the conversion of the disciples from gloom and despondency to joy and confidence, from paralyzed inaction to burning zeal, was that the crucified Jesus had returned as their empowering Lord.

The resurrection of Jesus placed the final seal upon His divine mission of redemption. Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, . . . by the resurrection from the dead." By it the ignominy of the cross was wiped away, the efficacy of His sacrifice was demonstrated, and His advocacy on behalf of repentant sinners at His Father's throne was assured.

Not only was He enabled by "the power of His resurrection" to quicken those who were "dead in trespasses and sins," but, through Him, death itself was finally conquered. By His resurrection He possessed Himself of the keys of death and the grave, and Himself became the "firstfruits of them that slept." In His resurrection we have the pledge that at the "last day" all who "die in the Lord" will come forth from the dust of the earth to live for evermore. Finally His resurrection assures us that He will come at last to "judge the world in righteousness," to "destroy them which destroy the earth," and to restore all things according to His eternal purpose. No wonder the resurrection has been called the "central fact" of time and of eternity.

This chapter is based on Luke 24:13-49; John 20:19-23; Mark 16:12, 13.



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CHAPTER FORTY-SIX

Doubting Thomas Believes

ALTHOUGH Luke states that "the eleven" were present when Jesus appeared to the disciples in the upper room late in the evening of the resurrection day, the expression was used in a general way to mean all the disciples who were in Jerusalem at the time, except for the betrayer, Judas. Actually John tells us that Thomas, called Didymus, was not there. Whether some occasion necessitated his absence or whether, hugging his discouragement, he had gone off by himself, not wanting even the company of his fellow disciples, we do not know; but he did not at that time see Jesus.

When the other disciples sought him out and told him, "We have seen the Lord," he refused to believe them until he should have visible evidence for himself. "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe," he declared. And nothing they could say could convince him.

For a whole week the disciples saw nothing of Jesus, but, "after eight days," which would be the following Sunday, when Thomas had at last been persuaded to come out of his seclusion and join their company, Jesus appeared to them again, despite "the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you."

The object of His coming was obvious when He spoke immediately to Thomas. "Thomas," He said, "reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing."

But Thomas did not now need such evidence. The sight of the Master was sufficient to dispel all his doubts and, casting himself at Jesus' feet, he cried, "My Lord and my God."

It must be said to the credit of Thomas that though he was slow to believe, when

"My Lord and my God," cried Thomas, casting himself at Jesus' feet.
By CARL BLOCH

he was convinced, his confession was profound and full; for the words he used were the two chief divine titles in the Old Testament Scriptures. Now Thomas declared his belief that Jesus was none other than Jehovah Elohim, the "Lord God." And Jesus accepted the titles, as well as the worship of Thomas and the other disciples as they joined with him.

Because Thomas really wanted to believe, Jesus came specially to dissipate his doubts, but He took the opportunity of this occasion to point out for the benefit of all to whom the good news of the risen Lord would thereafter come, that the promise of Scripture, confirmed by the testimony of those to whom He had shown Himself not once but five times on His resurrection day, should be sufficient to evoke saving faith.

"Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed," Jesus said to Thomas, but more blessed would be the faith of the generations to come who might not have the privilege of seeing Him in person, yet who would believe on the strength of Scripture, attested by those who had been "eye witnesses of His majesty."

Having used His meeting with Thomas and the other disciples to teach this important lesson, Jesus vanished, not to appear again until He met His disciples in Galilee. It is strange, therefore, that the idea should have arisen in the Christian church that Jesus intended His two Sunday appearances to indicate to the believers that henceforth they were to celebrate the first day of the week as the Christian rest day instead of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment.

Some with a very imperfect knowledge of the original Greek have even suggested that the literal rendering of the expression "first day of the week"—which could be translated "first of the Sabbaths"—indicates that the resurrection day had become the first of the new Sabbaths in honour of the resurrection of Jesus. This idea is both grammatically and theologically foolish. It is grammatically ridiculous because this designation of the day is the way in which all the days of the week were described in relation to the weekly Sabbath. Sunday was the "first day after the Sabbath," the next day was "the second after the Sabbath," and so on until the next Sabbath. If the explanation offered were correct, only the resurrection day could possibly have been called "the first of the [new] Sabbaths," but the fact is that every subsequent first day in the New Testament is similarly designated. Clearly this supposed evidence for Sunday sacredness is the result of a woeful ignorance of the Greek idiom and has no basis whatever.

Nor are there any grounds in the story itself for believing that Jesus now placed a special sacredness on the first day of the week. The gathering on the resurrection day was not for corporate worship in honour of the risen Christ, for none of the disciples, with the possible exception of John, believed that He was risen, and the reason for their being together behind locked doors is precisely stated as "for fear of the Jews."

Furthermore, Jesus did not actually meet with His disciples on the "first day of the week," but after sunset on the evening of the second day. If He had intended to give special honour to the first day He would have met with the disciples before sunset on the resurrection day, not at the beginning of the next!

There is no evidence either that the disciples assembled on the "eighth day" following to honour that day with worship. The disciples had probably continued to lodge in the upper room until the end of the Passover, so as not to evoke the criticism that they had neglected the chief feast of the sacred year. Then the day after the last Passover Sabbath would be a likely time for all the disciples to meet to discuss their return to Galilee to keep their appointment with Jesus, and Thomas had doubtless been persuaded to attend in order to talk over their future plans. Jesus had not arranged to meet them on that day, and after He had silenced Thomas's doubts He disappeared again. And thereafter, so far as we know, Jesus never met with His disciples again on a Sunday.

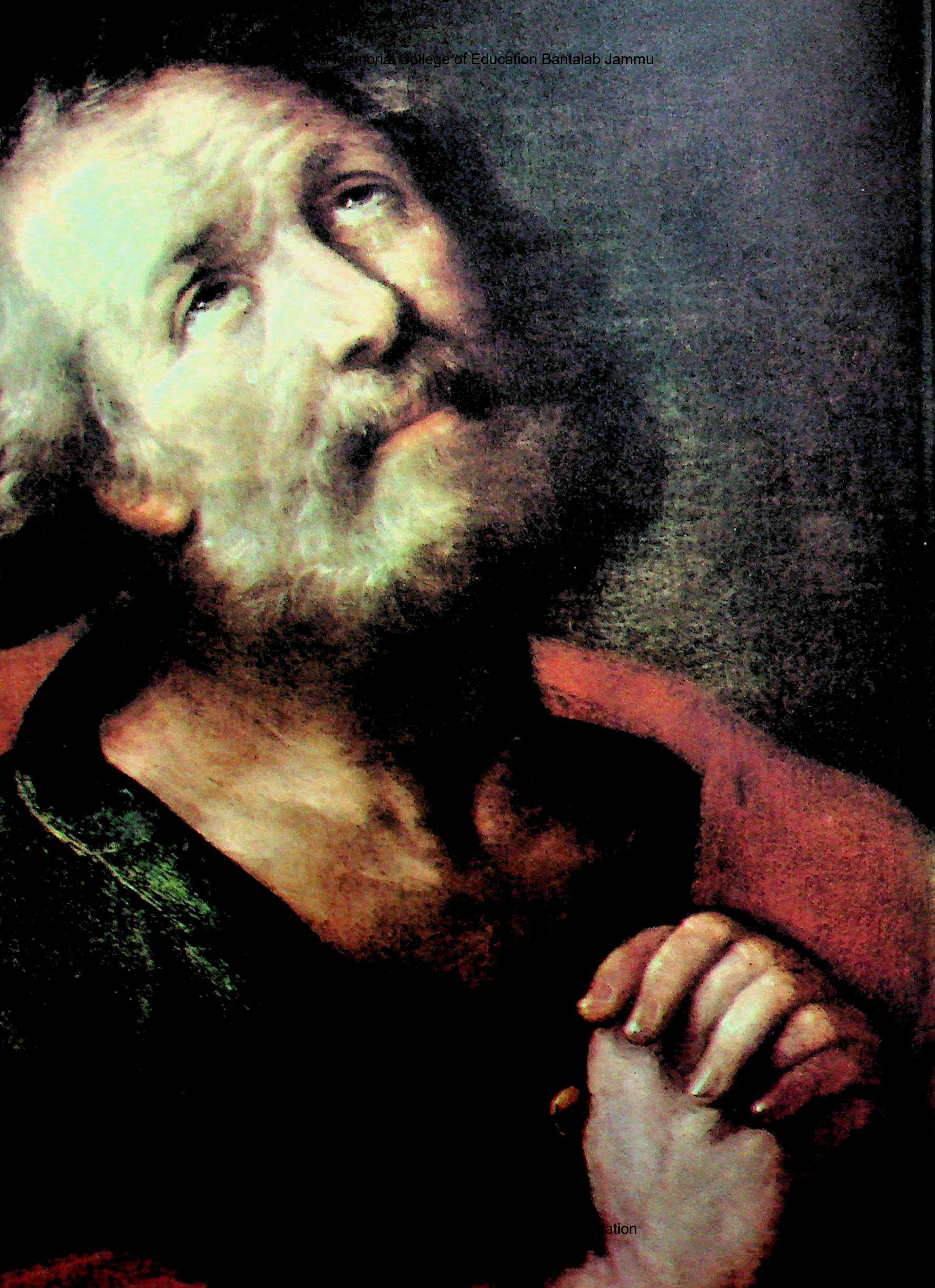
That the disciples showed no special regard for Sunday after the ascension is indicated by the many references to their preaching on Sabbath, but never on Sunday, and by the fact that when Paul was invited to preach to the Gentiles after his Sabbath meeting with the Jews at Antioch in Pisidia he did so not on a Sunday, but on "the next Sabbath."

The fact is that the idea of Sunday sacredness superseding the immemorial seventh-day Sabbath is not derived from Scripture at all, but was the result of the Christians of the Greek and Roman world, after the death of the apostles, seeking to break the church's connection with Judaism by abandoning the supposed "Jewish" Sabbath and putting in its place the "Christian" Sunday. The record of the Christian councils of the first centuries shows that Sunday observance was forcibly imposed by the church of the West on the church of the East, and that when the Roman church attained a dominating position in Christendom, "judaizing" by continuing to observe the Sabbath was forbidden on pain of dire punishment.

Sunday observance, therefore, though an ancient practice in the church, has no sanction in Scripture. It was in reality born of error and fastened upon the church by the Roman apostasy. When many papal errors were discarded at the Reformation, the more thorough-going Protestants urged that Sunday observance also should be eliminated, but sad to say, expediency caused it to be left untouched to mar the faith of most of the churches which grew out of the Reformation movement.

But though the Reformation was "arrested," and an only partially reformed faith was adopted by the great Protestant churches in this country and on the Continent, there were those who, in the face not only of Catholic but of Protestant persecution, determined to go on to the recovery of the whole faith "once delivered unto the saints," and one of the marks by which the true church today is to be identified, is that they have the "faith of Jesus" and by grace "keep [all] the commandments of God."

This chapter is based on John 20:24-29; Mark 16:14.



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CHAPTER FORTY-SEVEN

Lovest Thou Me?

As soon as Passover week was over, the disciples left for Galilee as they had been instructed by Jesus, and while they waited to keep the appointment He had made them, they went to their homes in Capernaum.

One evening, soon after their arrival, several of the disciples were walking by the lakeside. There was Peter and Thomas, now freed from all his doubts, the sons of Zebedee, two other disciples, perhaps Andrew and Philip, and Nathanael, who had decided to stay in Capernaum rather than go back to Cana in the hills.

Like so many vigorous people, Peter found waiting around very frustrating, and as he saw the fishermen, many of whom he knew well, getting the boats ready to go out onto the lake at nightfall, he suddenly announced to the others, "I go a fishing." He felt that it would give him something to do, and the proceeds would help to replenish their meagre resources. At once his companions said, "We also go with thee." So, putting some nets into one of the spare boats belonging to the Zebedee family, they set off. But though they toiled all night "they caught nothing."

Disappointed at having apparently lost their skill, they were returning to the shore as dawn broke over the hills of Gilead, when they heard Someone calling from the shore, "Children, have ye any meat?" or in other words, Had they caught anything? Not recognizing Jesus, either by reason of the morning mist over the beach or, as on other occasions, because their eyes were "holden," they tersely replied, "No."

Then the Man on the shore called again, "Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find."

Thinking that He had seen signs of a shoal close inshore, they threw the

"Thou knowest that I love Thee," declared Peter to Jesus in deep contrition.
By PROCACCINI

piled-up net into the sea as He indicated and soon "they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes."

Staggered at such a haul when they had not caught anything during the best hours of the night, they looked again at the Figure on the shore, and suddenly John whispered to Peter, "It is the Lord." It was John who first "believed" at the tomb, and now again he was the first to recognize Jesus.

Peter was standing on the gunwale of the boat, clad only in a sleeveless tunic reaching to his knees. When he realized it was Jesus "he girt his fisher's coat unto him" and jumped into the water. It was quite shallow just there and he waded easily to the beach, while the other disciples steered the little ship the remaining hundred yards to the shore, trailing the net full of fishes.

When they landed, they followed Peter along the beach, and soon saw "a fire of coals," or rather of broken branches which Jesus had gathered along the shore, and "fish laid thereon." On a stone beside the fire were cakes of bread.

As there was not enough food for all the disciples, Jesus said to Peter, "Bring of the fish which ye have now caught." Obediently he went back to the boat, and with the assistance of the other disciples dragged the net "full of great fishes" up the beach. He took some to Jesus and while they were cooking, he sat down with the others to sort and count the catch. They were surprised to find that they had netted no fewer than a hundred and fifty-three, "yet was not the net broken."

When enough food had been cooked, Jesus said to the disciples, "Come and dine," and they all sat down round the fire with Him. Jesus took of the bread and of the fish from the common dish, blessed it as He always did, and distributed to the disciples who were hungry after their hard night's work.

When the meal was over, Jesus took Peter aside and walked with him a little way along the beach. Feeling instinctively that Jesus was going to talk about his disloyalty, Peter waited apprehensively. When they were out of earshot Jesus said to him, "Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" Though Jesus made no actual reference to his denial, Peter realized what He meant. At one time such a question would have aroused him to a vehement protestation that his love was deeper than any of the others, but now he had no high opinion of himself. Far from loving Jesus "more" than the other disciples, his recent conduct made it doubtful whether he loved Him as much as they. So he humbly replied, "Yea, Lord; Thou knowest that I love Thee," but the word he used signified a lesser level of love than that which Jesus had put into His question. Jesus had used the word *agapao* which signifies the highest love, to which man can rise only by divine grace. Peter did not feel justified in claiming this and said in effect, "You know that I regard You with a deep affection [*phileo*]."

Without commenting on Peter's reply, Jesus said, "Feed My lambs." By this He indicated to Peter that as he had been graciously restored to favour by Jesus, he should have a special sympathy for the mistakes and the hesitant faith of those who were new in the truth.

When they had walked a little farther Jesus said again, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" Once more He asked Peter if his love was of the highest, but He did not this time ask him if he loved "more" than his brethren. A little perplexed, Peter replied as he had done before, "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love [have a deep affection for] Thee."

This time Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep." Having experienced how Satan had followed him like a wolf to destroy him, he would be able to give pastoral care to the other sheep of God's flock.

After a few moments Jesus said to Peter for the third time, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" but this time He followed Peter's lead and said in effect, "Can you really say you have a deep affection for Me?"

At this Peter was grieved. He had admitted that he could not claim to have manifested the highest level of love for Jesus, but when Jesus queried even his own estimate of his love he felt hurt. But he realized that his actions justified Jesus' doubts, and throwing himself upon the forgiving love of Him who could see "into men," he replied, "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that [at least] I love [have an affection for] Thee." In reply Jesus said a third time, "Feed My sheep."

Peter had denied Jesus three times, and so Christ's question was put to him three times that he might be able to give a threefold testimony to his repentance. Peter had indeed learned his lesson, and not only was he restored to a place among the chosen disciples, but also to his former place of leadership. We are not, however, to conclude from this, as the Roman Catholics falsely claim, that Peter was now appointed to permanent primacy in the Christian church. While he was privileged to preach the first missionary sermon at Pentecost, it was James who took the chair at the first missionary council reported in the fifteenth chapter of Acts, and Paul who eventually became the leading missionary to the Gentiles. Peter did a great work for God during the remaining years of his life, but never did he regard himself as anything "more" in zeal, devotion, or authority than a co-worker with the other disciples in the service of Christ. The claim of the Roman church for him was the last thing that he would ever have claimed for himself.

Having given Peter opportunity to show the genuineness of his repentance, Jesus went on to tell him of the ultimate sacrifice which he would make in his Master's service. "When thou wast young," Jesus said, "thou girdest thyself, and walkest whither thou wouldest." Then he was his own master and could do what he liked. "But when thou shalt be old," Jesus went on, "thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. This spake He signifying by what death he should glorify God." And by way of final encouragement to His beloved disciple, Jesus ended the conversation with the exhortation, "Follow Me."

There was no question now as to Peter's readiness to follow Jesus in life and in death, and the book of Acts and his own epistles show how faithfully he did.

"follow" the Lord. His death is not recorded in Scripture, but tradition has it that in Rome in A.D. 67, on the same day that Paul was beheaded, Peter was scourged and crucified. But so different was he then from the boastful Peter of earlier years, that he asked to be put to death head downward, because he did not feel worthy of the honour of dying as Jesus had done. Devotedly Peter glorified God in his life of service, and nobly he glorified Him in his dying.

As Jesus turned to go back along the shore of the lake, Peter saw John coming to join them, and asked, 'Lord, and what shall this man do?" Peter and John had always been companions in service and Peter wondered whether they would continue to work together and perhaps even suffer and die together for Christ. It was a natural enough question in a way, but Jesus did not satisfy his curiosity. Instead He replied, "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou Me."

Jesus' words are a warning to all workers for God that associations in service must never become so close, that if they need to be broken, invidious comparisons are made. Sometimes Christian workers feel that others have had privileges or advantages they have not had, and may even jealously aspire to the vocation of another, while despising their own calling. Jesus wanted to emphasize that it is His prerogative to decide how the talents of His servants shall be used, and that no comparisons with others should ever disturb their joy and satisfaction in service for Him.

In the case of these two disciples, John, in the providence of God, was permitted to continue in service long after Peter was martyred for the faith, and more than once he was himself delivered from a martyr's death. But, contrary to the belief of some that he would "not die," he did eventually join the "dead in Christ," and with Peter awaits the day when Jesus will return to awaken and reward His sleeping people.

So also with us, if we keep our eyes on Jesus, and are faithful in the work He gives us to do, we may be assured that His providence will sustain us in every experience we are called upon to meet, and at the last there will be a "crown" and a share in the "inheritance of the saints" reserved especially for us.

This chapter is based on John 21:1-23.

CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

The Great Commission

WHEN Jesus left His disciples by the lakeside, He bade them gather as many of His Galilean followers as possible to meet Him on a certain mountain and at a time which He indicated.

In harmony with these instructions the disciples passed the word around as widely as they could, and when the day came the believers made their way to the rendezvous by various routes in order not to arouse suspicion. At the appointed time there were more than five hundred gathered together, by far the largest number Jesus ever assembled between His resurrection and His ascension.

As the believers waited in groups on the mountain side Jesus suddenly appeared among them and "when they saw Him they worshipped Him." Even in this privileged company, however, there were some who "doubted" at first that it was really He. But they were not in His presence long before, like Thomas, they knew that it was the risen Lord.

Why did Jesus bring all these believers together on this occasion? One important reason was to provide positive evidence of His resurrection to the disciples in Galilee as He had done in Jerusalem. As Paul later commented, it was the climax of the "many infallible proofs" by which He "showed Himself alive" from the dead.

But Jesus had not brought all these believers together only to provide a final and conclusive witness to His resurrection. His further purpose was to commission His church for its great task. To the apostles and the believers in the upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus had first outlined their future work for Him. On that occasion there were perhaps a hundred or so Judean believers present. Now to the believers in Galilee He repeated the great commission.

First, Jesus proclaimed the authority which had been vested in Him by His Father. "All power," He declared, "is given unto Me in heaven and in earth." Henceforth, seated at the right hand of the throne of God in heaven, He would have at His command all heavenly intelligences for the exercise of His mediatorial ministry. And on earth all power would be available to His appointed heralds for the proclamation of the Gospel of His saving grace.

"Go ye therefore," He bade His followers, "and teach all nations." In the days when He Himself went about teaching and preaching, His call had been "Come." Now He bade His people "Go." The "disciples" were now designated "apostles."

By "ye" Jesus meant all who were then listening to His words, and all who would in due course hear the Gospel from their lips. All, in fact, who have learned the joy of salvation are to go forth and tell it to those who know it not.

When Jesus was on earth He went only to the "lost sheep of the house of Israel," but now the opportunity of hearing the Gospel was to go to Gentile as well as Jew, to Greek and barbarian, to all peoples everywhere. They were to begin their new proclamation in Jerusalem, and spectacular indeed were the results of the first proclamation there on the day of Pentecost. Then from Jerusalem they were to go into "Judea" and "Samaria," and finally "unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Not only was the Gospel to go geographically to all the world, but it was to reach every stratum of society, from the highest to the lowest. Rich and poor, bond and free, learned and unlearned, all were to hear the saving truths of the Gospel of redemption. It was to go not only to "all nations" but to "every creature."

The Gospel which God's heralds were to carry was the "Gospel of the kingdom," the kingdom of grace which He would first establish in the hearts of men, and the kingdom of glory into which He would gather His people at His coming.

The outward sign of the inward acceptance of the Gospel, and the rite of initiation into His church, was to be baptism by immersion. As John baptized in Jordan with the "baptism of repentance" in anticipation of the coming of Christ, and as Jesus instructed His disciples to baptize those who accepted His word during the days of His earthly ministry, so those who now received the Gospel of the kingdom were to be baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," signifying their death and burial with Christ, their spiritual resurrection to newness of life in Christ, and their adoption into the family of God. In itself, of course, the act of immersion in water has no inherent regenerating power, as some teach. The thief on the cross was saved, though he was never baptized. It is belief in Christ that saves. But because we believe, we desire to manifest our belief through baptism.

The initial step of belief, followed by baptism into the church of Christ, was to be followed by diligent instruction in "all things whatsoever" Jesus had "commanded." There was a reason for this emphasis, for even in Paul's day there were those who perverted or diminished the true faith into "another gospel," which was not the Gospel at all. And in our day likewise there are many who claim to be bearers of the Good Tidings, but who bear only half the Gospel, or even less!

There are those who declare "all things" pertaining to grace and faith, but who fail to teach the "all things" of obedience; forgetting that Jesus came to save His people "from" not "in" their sins. In all ages the true people of God are those who "keep the commandments of God" as a result of their acceptance of the "faith of Jesus."

Then there are the proponents of the "social gospel," who emphasize only the need for the betterment of the human environment through the application of Christian principles. All would agree that the efforts of Christian people toward the amelioration of man's earthly lot are eminently commendable, but God's messengers are not primarily called to "serve tables," as Peter categorically pointed out. Their chief task is to prepare men for a future life in the kingdom of heaven, and any so-called gospel which fails to do this is a perversion of the true Gospel.

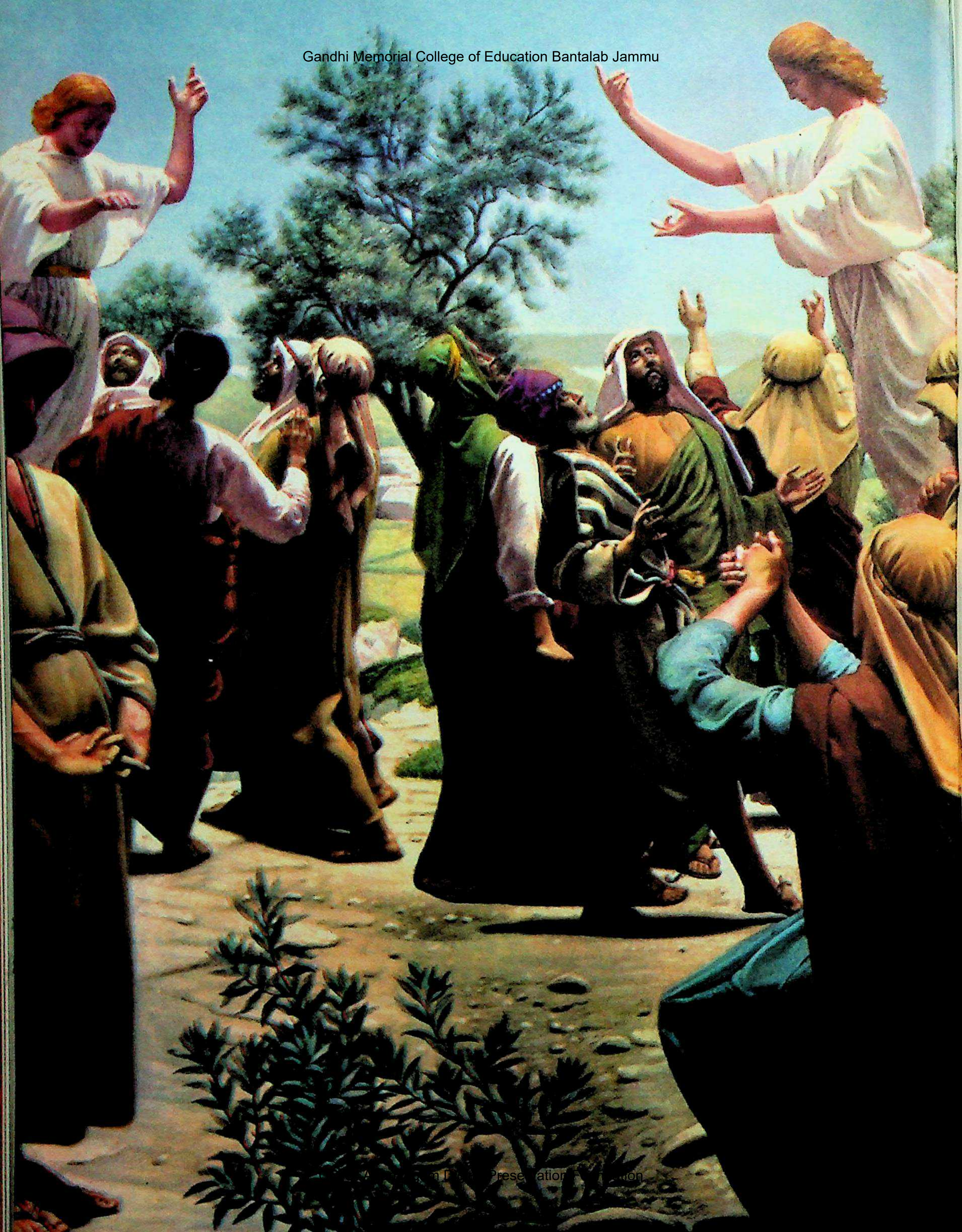
Paul warned that in the "last days" there would be many who would have a "form" of godliness, but who would be devoid of the "power" thereof, but those who were truly fulfilling the great commission would be carrying the whole Gospel to the whole world. And that Gospel is the unadulterated, undiminished "faith once delivered unto the saints" with its call for obedience, by grace to all "the commandments of God."

"Gifts" appropriate to their need were promised to Christ's witnesses "severally" as the Spirit should choose, but the greatest gift of all would be the presence of Jesus, which would be with His people "all the days, even unto the end of the world."

As the Gospel messengers fulfilled their God-given task from generation to generation, "signs" would set the seal of God's approval upon their ministry. "These signs," said Jesus, "shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover. . . . They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them." But the greatest "sign" would be the spiritual transformations wrought by the Gospel in the lives of sinners saved by grace.

The response of the first disciples to this "total" programme of Christ was the "total" surrender of themselves to the task, with the result that, in their day, they saw the Gospel preached "to every creature which is under heaven." Today the same dedication is carrying God's last message of mercy to "every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people." Soon "this Gospel of the kingdom" will have been "preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations;" then the "end" of this world order will come and God's new world order will be brought in.

This chapter is based on Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-18.



CHAPTER FORTY-NINE

I Will Come Again!

WHEN Jesus had given His commission to the assembled believers on the mountain in Galilee, He bade His disciples return to Jerusalem, where the proclamation of the Gospel of the risen Christ was to begin. While they awaited further instructions from Him, they met regularly in the upper room. It may have been during these days that Jesus appeared to James, as Paul mentions. Then on the twenty-fifth of the month of Iyyar, just ten days before Pentecost, as the disciples were gathered together, Jesus appeared in their midst and they fell before Him in worship.

This time He did not stay to talk, but at once summoned them to follow Him. Through the streets of Jerusalem they went and out of the city by the Sheep Gate. They descended the Kidron steps, crossed the river, and took the road up the Mount of Olives. Passing the Garden of Gethsemane they soon reached the rough upland on the central summit of the mountain overlooking the village of Bethany.

Here Jesus halted and the disciples gathered around, wondering what word He had for them at this time. Now that Jesus had "suffered," it surely would not be long before He "entered into the glory" of His kingdom. One of the disciples, therefore, asked Him plainly, "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?"

Jesus could have told them that a long time would pass before the establishment of His kingdom, but He did not want to discourage them. So He said briefly, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power."

The timing of the kingdom they could well leave to God. What was most important, was that they should address themselves to the interim task which He

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On the Mount of the Ascension, the angels declared that one day Jesus would return again in glory.
By CARL BLOCH

had given to them. So Jesus went on, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Then as He stretched forth His nail-pierced hands in blessing upon the disciples, He began to ascend from the earth. The eyes of the disciples followed Him as He rose higher and higher until a cloud of glorious angels surrounded Him and "He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven."

The Bible does not give us sufficient information to identify the exact place of the ascension, and as there are three Gethsemanes there are three suggested spots, all within a quarter of a mile of one another, which are pointed out as the place from which He ascended.

In the fourth century a Rotunda of the Ascension was erected on one of these spots. It had a paved court open to the sky, symbolic of Christ's ascent, and was surrounded by three rows of columns, forming a double portico. In the centre of the court was the supposed rock from which Christ rose. This first structure was destroyed by the Persians, but was rebuilt by the Crusaders in the form of an octagonal building supported on eight double pillars, with arches between, and again open to the sky. When the Crusaders were driven out, the Moslems filled in the arches and added a dome, which form it has retained until the present time. For curiously enough, while the Moslems deny the resurrection of Christ, they believe in His ascension, and a few yards away from the building is a mosque and minaret from which there is a wonderful view toward Jerusalem and down into the wilderness of Judea.

A short distance from what is now the Chapel of the Ascension, the Russian bell tower, erected in the late nineteenth century, is also identified with the place of the ascension, and so is the residence of the Greek Orthodox patriarch not far away.

Wherever the exact place was, it is significant that Jesus ascended from a mountain when His work was done. It was on a mountain in Galilee that He preached His Sermon on the Mount and ordained His disciples. On the Mount of Transfiguration His eternal glory was for a moment revealed, and on Calvary's mount He wrought His supreme sacrifice for the redemption of a lost world. Now it was from the Mount of Olives that He returned to His home in glory, and when He comes finally to establish His kingdom on earth it will be upon this same mountain that He will descend in power and glory.

While the gospels describe the dramatic departure of Christ from the earth, they do not portray His arrival at the gate of heaven. This thrilling scene, however, is prophetically described by the Psalmist. Vividly he tells how, when the triumphal procession reached the heavenly gates, the cry went up from the accompanying host, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Back from heaven came the answering cry, "Who is this King of glory?" to which the angel host replied, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in."

Again the question came, "Who is this King of glory?" and the reply was repeated, "The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory."

Then the portals of heaven opened wide, and the procession, led by the glorified Christ, swept through to the throne of God, where the victory of Christ was proclaimed. The command went forth, "Let all the angels of God worship Him," and as all heaven was prostrated in worship, the courts of glory rang with the shouts of praise.

When Jesus ascended we are told that "He led captivity captive." Doubtless this refers to the dead who were raised from their graves at His resurrection. These were given an honoured place in the triumphal procession back to heaven, and in the Revelation we glimpse them finally as the twenty-four "elders," sharing in the worship of the angels round the throne.

As the disciples strained their eyes to catch a last glimpse of their ascending Lord, a voice called to them. Turning in the direction from which it came, they saw two angels. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven?" said one of them. "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven."

It was necessary that Jesus should return to heaven to begin His mediatorial ministry as our High Priest on the basis of His vicarious sacrifice. It was necessary also that He should go away in order that He might dispense the "gifts" His earthly witnesses needed for the prosecution of their great task. Jesus had said, too, "I go to prepare a place for you . . . that where I am, there ye may be also." For all these reasons it was expedient that Jesus should leave His followers for a time. But when the last soul has received the invitation of the Gospel, when Jesus has pleaded His blood for the last repentant sinner, and the heavenly "mansions" are ready for the reception of His faithful people, Jesus will fulfil His promise to "come again." Then will the present kingdom of grace give place to His universal and everlasting kingdom of glory.

The ascension of Jesus, the angels declared further, would set the pattern for His return. The very "same Jesus," who was parted from His disciples, will come back in person to receive His people to Himself. As Jesus ascended visibly from the midst of His disciples into heaven, so "every eye" will see Him return. Amid a cloud of shining angels, He ascended into heaven, and accompanied by all "the holy angels" He will return to the earth to "gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other." "And so," adds the apostle Paul, "shall we ever be with the Lord."

When the angels had delivered their message they vanished and the disciples fell to the ground in worship. Then they went back to the city and entered the temple "praising and blessing God."

Ten days later, at Pentecost, the promised "power from on high" descended upon them in flaming fire, and they went forth to begin their great missionary task. Soon persecution broke out against the rapidly growing church and the believers were scattered. But this only accelerated the work of the Gospel, for, as they had been commanded, "they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word."

Here the story of these pages must perforce end. We have followed the footprints of Jesus until His feet left the earth at His ascension, and space does not permit us to follow the footsteps of the ascended Christ in the story of His church through the centuries.

Suffice it to say that the fervent hope of the aged John in the closing sentences of the last gospel to be written has been abundantly fulfilled. "These are written," he declared, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name," and in every generation since, multitudes have found that "life" in a look at the crucified and risen Saviour. The changes wrought in the lives of men by the Gospel have conclusively shown that the "testimony" of the inspired penmen is no ordinary word, no mere philosophy of life, but the very Word of our salvation.

In spite of persecution and apostasy, the message of the Gospel has gone forth "conquering and to conquer" until in our day, through the unparalleled means of communication God's providence has provided, we have seen its miraculous extension into all the world, and in the hearts of God's people everywhere the conviction is deepening that the "end" long foretold is near.

True, the great majority of men "see not the bright light" behind "the clouds" of darkness which cover the earth, but we know that He is there, eagerly waiting for the day of His final manifestation. Soon He will fulfil His promise and come again the "second time," not in humiliation but in glory, not to be rejected of men but for the establishment of His universal and everlasting kingdom.

If therefore in our hearts we can pray the last prayer of the Bible, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus," we may be assured that in the great day of His coming we will be among those who will look up and say, "This is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation." God grant that this glorious company may include you.

This chapter is based on Luke 24:50-53; Mark 16:19, 20; John 20:30, 31; 21:24, 25; Acts 1:6-12.

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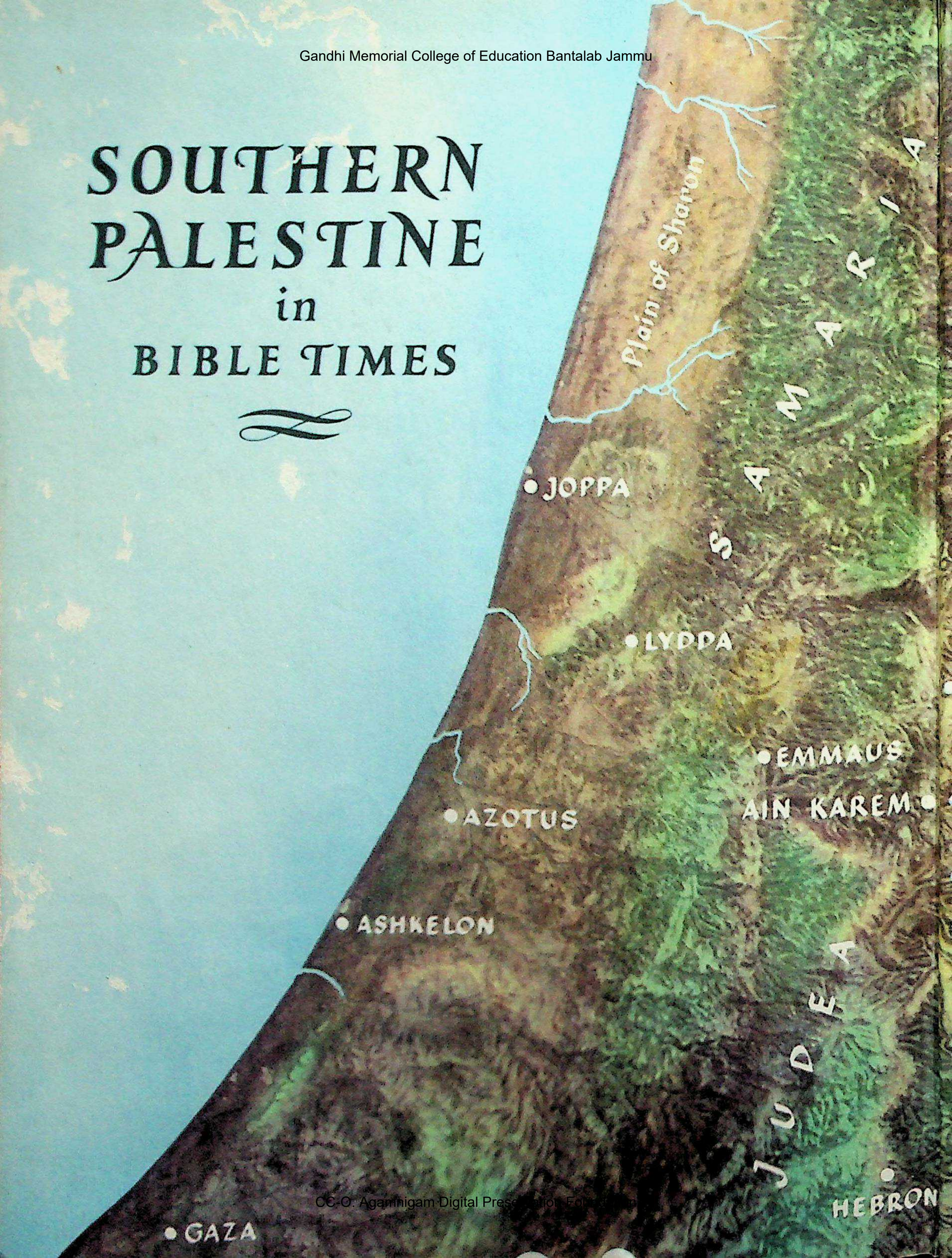
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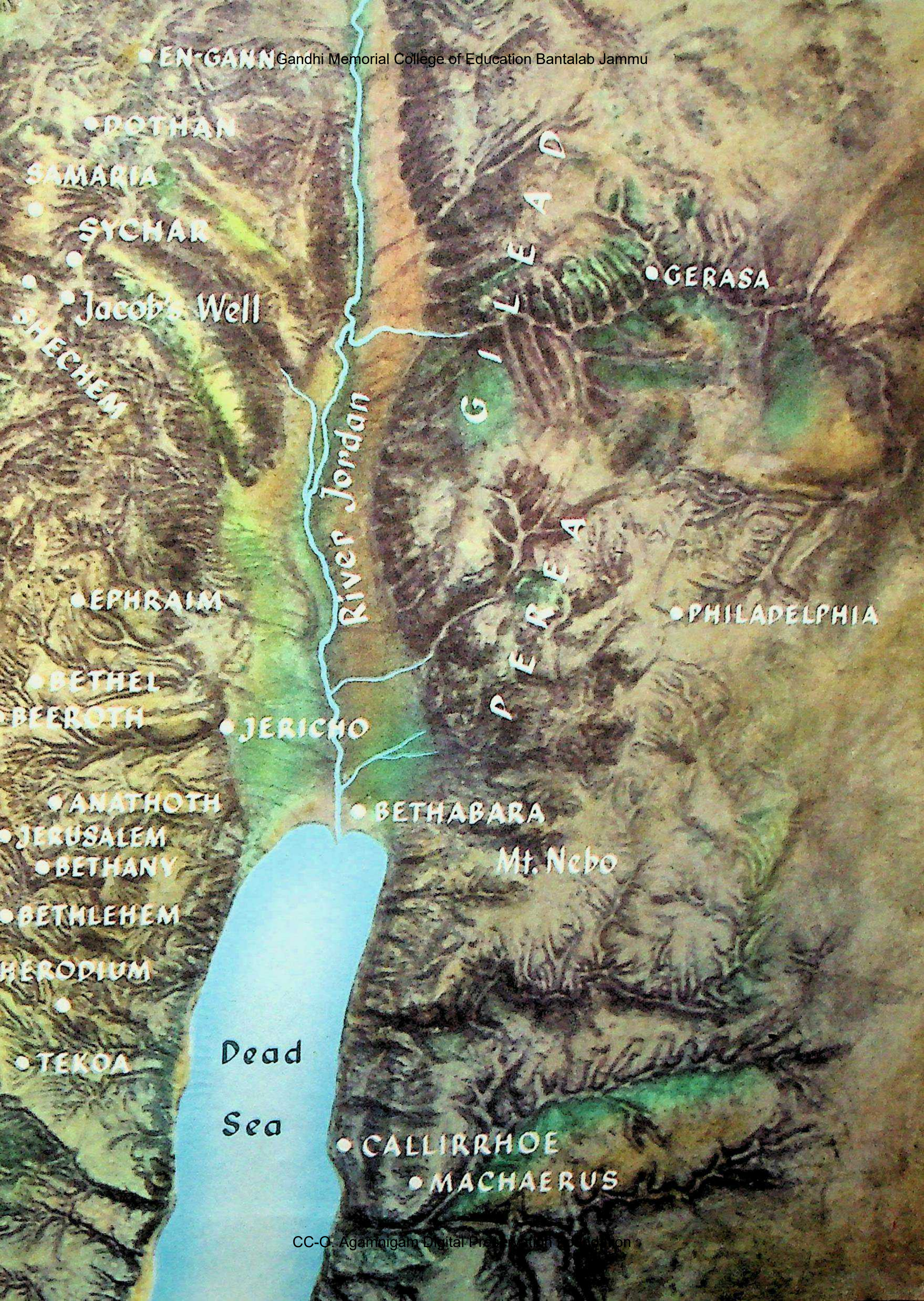
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